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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Les Gens de l'Air: French as the Language of Work, 1976

by

Catherine Lynne Lamont (C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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Supervisor

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Date. 12 September 1989 ....

Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to demonstrate why the air traffic controllers' dispute of 1976, which directly involved only a few people, helped to convince Québécois that the Quebec state and not Ottawa should be the guarantor of their language rights. The dispute centred on Ottawa's attempts to implement the federal Official Languages Act in Quebec by making some of Quebec's air traffic control towers bilingual. As a result of these attempts, English-speaking air traffic controllers and air line pilots went on strike, claiming that bilingual air traffic control posed a threat to aviation safety.

Chapter One outlines the political and philosophical underpinnings of Canada's Official Languages Act, which provided the basis for the implementation of French in Quebec's control towers. This chapter then examines Quebec's political climate during the period surrounding the air traffic control conflict and suggests how this climate influenced Québécois' willingness to accept a federally enacted language policy. Chapter Two then studies the development of the air traffic control conflict itself. Two aspects of this development are especially significant: how the protagonists in the dispute, the francophone and anglophone controllers and pilots, viewed the question of air safety, and how the Ministry of Transport handled their disagreements on this crucial question. Both of these aspects influenced public perception of the issue, which is

the subject of chapters Three and Four. Public opinion on the air traffic controllers' dispute has undergone some critical evaluation, but the tendency has been to treat the views in "English Canada" and francophone Quebec as monolithic. In fact, anglophone public opinion in Quebec differed significantly from that of the rest of English-speaking Canada, and the reasons for the difference are examined here. As well, while Québécois were united in their support of the francophone airmen, their reasons for offering such support varied, and an examination of them provides insight into Québécois' perceptions of the role of Ottawa and the Quebec state in protecting and enhancing their language rights. While the air traffic control conflict did not determine the direction of Quebec's relations with the rest of Canada, it helped to cement in the consciousness of Québécois the belief that their future as a francophone nation lay within the boundaries of the Quebec state.

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Ken Munro, for his guidance, encouragement, and patience. As well, the Department of History at the University of Alberta made much of the research for this thesis possible by helping me to secure funding for a trip to the Bibliothèque nationale in Quebec. Finally, some good friends also contributed. My thanks to Lynne Austin for proofreading the draft and providing useful comments, Moira Izatt for helping with the French translations, and David Clyburn for being a constant source of inspiration.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
I. "The Fact that We Speak French"	17
II. "Politicians Have No Place in the Cockpits of the Nation's Airlines"	46
III. "No Claim to Greatness At All"	85
IV. "What the Hell are We Doing in This Country?"	112
Conclusion	150
Bibliography	160

Introduction

> We are Québécois. What that means, first and foremost . . . is that we are attached to this one corner of the earth where we can be completely ourselves: this Quebec . . . Being ourselves is essentially a matter of keeping and developing a personality that has survived for three and a half centuries. At the core of this personality is the fact that we speak French. Everything else depends on this one essential element and follows from it or leads us infallibly back to it.
>
> - René Lévesque, *An Option for Quebec* (1968)

> The "Frenchness" of Quebec . . . is being consummated right now.
>
> - Edward McWhinney, *Quebec and the Constitution* (1979)

During the summer of 1976 English-speaking air traffic controllers and air line pilots went on strike to protest the federal Ministry of Transport's plans to permit the use of French in Quebec's control towers as part of its bilingualism policy. The dispute became a symbol of the oppression of Québécois by "English Canada" and at a pivotal point in Quebec's political development caused a crisis of confidence in the federal government as a protector of Québécois' language rights. The conflict occurred during a period in Quebec's history in which its people and government were taking irreversible steps to entrench their right to speak French at work and at all times in their daily lives. Ottawa's Official Languages Act was supposed to help facilitate this process, but instead the air traffic controllers' dispute only demonstrated the apparent inability of a "French Power" government in Ottawa to guarantee the language rights of Québécois, particularly in

the face of objections from English-speaking Canadians. The federal government's weakness, in turn, whetted the growing belief among Québécois that only within Quebec could the survival of the French Canadian "race" be guaranteed. Indeed, at no time since the conscription crisis of the Second World War had that belief seemed to Québécois to be more justified. The purpose of this thesis is to outline the development of the belief among Québécois that Quebec and not Ottawa was the guarantor of their language rights and then to demonstrate why a dispute involving only a very few people within a limited economic sector cemented that belief in their collective consciousness.

The dispute itself involved English-speaking air traffic controllers, members of the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association (CATCA), who walked off their jobs on June 20, 1976. They were forced back to work by an injunction, but anglophone pilots of the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association (CALPA) took up their cause and staged an eight-day wildcat strike. Both groups were arguing that bilingual air traffic control was a threat to aviation safety. Their French-speaking counterparts, who had formed their own organization, l'Association des gens de l'air du Québec (AGAQ), as a result of their point of view on this very issue, vehemently disagreed, claiming that not only was it safer for French-speaking controllers to speak French to French-speaking pilots rather than English but also that it was their fundamental right to do so. The strike resulted in

an avalanche of opinion from English-speakers outside Quebec, most of which indicated support for the anglophone aviators not for air safety's sake but because of their opposition to bilingualism. And in settling the dispute, MOT, which had dithered on the subject of bilingual control for over two years, signed an agreement that almost unequivocally endorsed the anglophone airmen's point of view. Consequently, the department and thus the federal government appeared to Quebecers to have responded as much to angry public invective as they had to any concerns for safety in the air. Quebecers, both French- and English-speaking, were outraged by the agreement; moreover, opinion throughout Quebec was unanimous in its support of the francophone pilots and controllers and condemnation of CATCA, CALPA, and MOT.

In order to fully comprehend the magnitude of the air traffic controllers' dispute in the minds of Québécois, one must first place it within the context of Quebec's political evolution, in particular Quiet Revolution ideology and the development of language policy at both the federal and provincial levels. This is the subject of Chapter One, which outlines developments from the postwar era to 1976. Of significance was the emergence of two opposing ideologies, that of the Citélibristes and the neo-nationalists. From the first came the notion of Quebec's place as an equal partner within the federal system. Henri Bourassa had been the progenitor of this idea, but Pierre Trudeau was in 1976 its

champion and major spokesperson. Neo-nationalism, on the other hand, was a secular version of the clerical nationalism which had kept Québécois mindful of their uniqueness for two centuries. Its adherents believed that Confederation was a compact between a sovereign Quebec and an equally sovereign "English Canada" and, moreover, that in order to best fulfill its people's aspirations, Quebec had to be as autonomous as possible within that compact.

These opposing ideologies are the subject of Michael Behiels' *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution*,[1] and the outline in Chapter One of the directions taken by them does not differ substantially from Behiels' analysis, although it is of necessity greatly simplified. Citélibrisme and neo-nationalism in this thesis are also discussed in terms of their impact on the development of language policy. The federal policy of bilingualism was based on the principles of equality and the individual's right to use the language of his or her choice and on the assumption that nationalism in Quebec could be defeated if Québécois could expand their idea of "home" to include all of Canada. Quebec's language policy, in particular Bill 22, was devised from a fundamentally different perspective. In the interests of protecting the French language, the Quebec government made it not equal but predominant and placed the protection of the French fact before the protection of individuals'

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[1]Michael Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960*, (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986).

rights, particularly those of Quebec's English-speaking minority; moreover, the policy that made Bill 22 possible was based on the notion that Quebec, not Canada, was home to French-speakers. The significance of the assumptions underlying the Official Languages Act and Bill 22 are discussed by Kenneth McRoberts in "Bill 22 and Language Policy in Canada."[2] In this article McRoberts points out the major flaw in the federal Act, namely its failure to provide a workable basis for dealing with the imbalance in Quebec's economic structure. As McRoberts points out, Bill 22's tentative provisions for tackling that very question made it the more useful legislation from Québécois' point of view.

In Chapter One an attempt is made to connect two threads: one, of Quebec's overall political evolution and the development of language policy, and two, the air traffic control issue itself. The critical link between the two is described by Kenneth McRoberts in *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*:

> Unlike virtually all other federal language policies, concerned with the role of French in the civil service or the provision of French-language services outside Quebec, this policy dealt with language practices within Quebec itself.[3]

In effect, Trudeau and the federal Liberals were imposing on Quebec a language policy based on the Citélibriste idea that nationalism could be defeated if the federal government were more responsive to francophones throughout the country but

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[2]Kenneth McRoberts, "Bill 22 and Language Policy in Canada," *Queen's Quarterly*, 83(1976): 464-477.
[3]Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3d ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988): 236.

especially to those in Quebec. Consequently, the federal government's success or failure in their endeavour was bound to affect Québécois' perception of Ottawa as a possible guarantor of their language rights at a time when they were already very skeptical of its ability to fulfill that role. Moreover, their own government was then well into a process of developing its own language policy whose recommendations were geared to language-related problems in Quebec alone and without reference to its relations with the rest of Canada. Under these circumstances the process of implementing the Official Languages Act in Quebec's control towers, discussed in Chapter Two, was critical even without the objections of anglophone controllers and pilots. Not only did MOT have to succeed if the federal bilingualism policy were to appear to Québécois to have any relevance for ensuring their language rights, but it had to succeed with no delays or detours that might be construed by Québécois to be betraying a lack of commitment on the part of the federal government to these rights.

Unfortunately, however, the Ministry of Transport was not simply an instrument of Ottawa's language policy; it was also charged with enforcing aviation safety regulations, and the dispute between the anglophone members of CATCA and CALPA and AGAQ centred on their opposing ideas of what constituted "air safety." One broadly held assumption at the time in both English- and French-speaking Canada, for instance, was that CATCA and CALPA were motivated by

bigotry, with safety trumped up as a "motherhood" issue in order to sway public opinion. Another assumption, this time restricted to anglophones outside Quebec, was that AGAQ's members were so caught up with the issue of cultural and linguistic rights that they were ignoring safety. Chapter Two, however, demonstrates that neither side as a group was ill-motivated and that each had, in the absence of statistical data, a sound argument for its case. Bilingual air traffic control was a fact of air travel in many European countries, but Quebec's was the first case where an attempt was being made to switch from a unilingual to a bilingual system. Because there was no precedent for the change, there had also been no comprehensive studies conducted anywhere in the world to determine which system, if any, was the safer one.

This chapter then takes on the question of how MOT and the two groups of protagonists approached the issue and how these approaches affected later developments in the dispute, especially the responses of the public.[4] This question as well as the matter of air safety have been thoroughly covered in a detailed monograph by Sandford Borins, *The Language of the Skies: The Bilingual Air Traffic Control Conflict in Canada.*[4] A francophone, Irène Lépine, has also analyzed the dispute, this time with reference to the "relative deprivation" and "resource mobilization" models,

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[4]Sandford Borins, *The Language of the Skies: The Bilingual Air Traffic Control Conflict in Canada*, (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

and also provided insight into the motives and contingencies of MOT. Although her work is in English, it remains almost the sole example of francophone analysis of the subject.[5] A third critique of the air traffic control conflict has been provided by John Saywell. His "'Il y a du français dans l'air'," published in the 1976 edition of the *Canadian Annual Review*, emphasized MOT's handling of the dispute and demonstrated how it exacerbated the tensions between CALPA and CATCA.[6]

In Borins' analysis, MOT held conflicting roles of mediator between the disputants and partisan for the francophone side. Chapter Two of this thesis differs somewhat, taking the position that MOT's two roles involved its functions as regulatory body for the aviation industry and instrument of the federal government's policy of implementing bilingualism in federal institutions. Certainly MOT was also mediator and partisan, but its mediation between the protagonists in the dispute also involved the enforcement of its own regulations. MOT often seemed to be taking an elastic approach to these regulations and to be doing so in order to fulfill its other function, that of policy implementer. MOT's regulations were based on those of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which arguably allowed for bilingual control, depending upon one's

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[5]Irène Lépine, "The Air Traffic Controllers' Dispute: 1976," thesis, McGill University, 1980.
[6]John Saywell, "'Il y a du français dans l'air'," *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs*, (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1976).

interpretation of them. However, ICAO's regulations were open to other interpretations as well, namely those of CATCA and CALPA. A major reason for MOT's losing credibility in the eyes of anglophones was its seeming disregard for these interpretations, to the extent that CALPA believed MOT to have abrogated its regulatory responsibilities. MOT was not a partisan of the francophone point of view so much as it was an instrument for the implementation of a government policy designed to benefit francophones.

Because of its conflicting roles MOT had to tread carefully. But at best the department seemed to lurch from contingency plan to contingency plan, giving neither group much reason to feel confident in its ability either to maintain aviation safety standards or to make Quebec's airports bilingual. As a result, rather than enabling the principals to negotiate, MOT drove them further and further apart, symbolically as well as in actuality. Thus, the department helped to set the stage for the public response to the issue. The immediate consequence of MOT's handling of the dispute over bilingual air traffic control was, of course, the strike by CATCA and CALPA of June 1976. The long-term consequence was to make the issue a symbolic one for all Canadians, with the conflict turning not on differing perceptions of safety but on the merits or otherwise of bilingualism.

This public response is the subject of chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three deals with how the English-speaking

public perceived the issue and what effect their views had on its outcome. A major vehicle for the expression of opinion is the news media, and metropolitan newspapers were the main sources consulted. Where reference was made in the print media to other forums for public opinion, these were included too. The purpose of outlining anglophone public response in some detail was not to attempt to quantify that response, although this was undertaken to a very limited degree, but to provide a sense of the atmosphere in English-speaking Canada. It is argued in this chapter that anglophone public opinion was a key factor in determining the outcome of the dispute; indeed, MOT's actions in settling the dispute would be incomprehensible outside the context of the heated public debate which was taking place in daily papers and on talk shows. The aspect of anglophone public opinion that was the most alarming to Trudeau and other federal government members was that bilingualism seemed to be no more palatable to English-speakers than it was to Québécois. Those who responded to the issue in letters to the editor, public opinion surveys, and on radio and television indicated that while they didn't seem to know what kind of country they wanted, they knew what they did not want and that was a country that was officially bilingual. Furthermore, most showed little understanding of what the bilingualism program entailed, either for air traffic control or for Canadian political life in general. They often seemed to fear that at some point they would be

forced to speak French. Above all, the anti-French diatribes and other histrionics evident in many of the letters revealed a profound ignorance of how Québécois themselves perceived the issue and what they hoped to gain through bilingual air traffic control.

Ironically, the editors and columnists of major Canadian dailies who covered the issue evinced the same lack of understanding. Most of their earlier columns considered the issue to be mainly a safety issue, while later columns, evidently reacting to the public hysteria, invoked comforting but unrealistic images of a Canadian mosaic made cohesive through bilingualism. Both positions were taken without reference to the views of Québécois. In the first case, the CATCA-CALPA position was accepted with little critical evaluation; in the second, it was assumed that Québécois supported the concept of bilingualism as espoused by the Citélibriste, anti-nationalist Pierre Trudeau.

Trudeau himself responded to the English-speaking public's evident doubt about his vision of Canada. To defuse the crisis, he sent Transport minister Otto Lang to the negotiating table with CATCA and CALPA, where they reached an agreement in a matter of days. For Québécois the outcome was a shock. After having virtually guaranteed the implementation of bilingual control at all of Quebec's airports, MOT withdrew the guarantee, halting further implementation and even restricting French where it was already successfully being used until a commission of

inquiry determined whether French in the air was indeed safe.

These provisions were couched in a memorandum of understanding between CATCA, CALPA, and MOT, and it was this document which more than any other turn in the dispute solidified Québécois' perceptions of the federal government as "the government of English Canada." These perceptions and their development are the subject of Chapter Four. Here, the responses of Quebec's elected representatives, both federal and provincial, along with those of its news writers and editors and members of the public, are examined. Both anglophone and francophone perceptions come under scrutiny. English-speakers in Quebec, it was found, held substantially different views from those of anglophones outside the province. Because they believed their future in Quebec to be threatened by legislation such as Bill 22 and the trend towards a unilingual Quebec which it represented, they tended to support bilingualism, perceiving its success to be essential to the rights of the anglophone minority in Quebec. To Québécois, on the other hand, bilingualism was assessed on its ability to help further the objective of entrenching French as the language of work. Prior to the memorandum of understanding there was much skepticism of the federal government's ability to contribute to this objective; afterwards, however, opinion hardened, many a French-language commentator expressing profound doubt about a "French power" government too powerless to give French a

place even in Quebec.

These numerous examples of editorials and other commentary from Quebec were cited, first, to indicate how Quebecers of both language groups responded to the air traffic controllers' dispute itself. More importantly, however, the responses themselves indicate ideological positions held by Québécois. Nothing, for instance, was being said in French about language rights of minorities outside Quebec, which bilingualism had been developed in part to address. Most notable, though, was the assumption that the movement towards a predominantly francophone workplace, in the public and private sectors and from boardrooms to shop floors, was irreversible. French in the air and even the federal bilingualism policy itself as it pertained to language practices within Quebec were perceived to be part of this movement and not as manifestations of Trudeau's pan-Canadian vision. Finally, both francophone and anglophone public opinion in Quebec demonstrated that it was Quebec and not Ottawa that could best guarantee the success of this movement.

Apart from the works of Borins, Lépine, and Saywell, little research has been done on the air traffic control conflict. Borins documents the dispute from its beginnings in the early sixties to its conclusion, the commission of inquiry's report and the subsequent implementation of bilingualism in Quebec's control towers. Consequently, it provided most of the background and technical material for

this thesis. However, neither Borins nor Lépine go into great detail on public opinion, although Borins does point out that it played a pivotal role in the outcome of the dispute. This role is examined in detail herein. Moreover, Saywell discusses the unanimity of Québécois and the public discontent of "English Canada" from the perspective of a close observer, which made the prospect of examining both sides of the issue in depth all the more intriguing.

Naturally, a study of the air traffic control conflict of June 1976 leads to the question of what role the dispute played in the election of the Parti québécois the following November. John Saywell says of that election that "many Quebeckers went to the polling stations wearing their 'Il y a du français dans l'air' buttons on their coats,"[7] and a few historians who have written on this issue have placed it in this context. Ramsay Cook, for example, notes the importance of the dispute's occurring at a time when

> there existed a political party in a position to take advantage of the air traffic controllers' dispute in its campaign to take Quebec out of Confederation.[8]

Ian MacDonald in *From Bourassa to Bourassa: A Pivotal Decade in Canadian History* remarks on Québécois' "susceptibility" to the PQ following the summer of 1976.[9] *L'Action nationale* revealed some of that susceptibility in a short article

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[7] Saywell 83.
[8] Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971): 12.
[9] L. Ian MacDonald, *From Bourassa to Bourassa: A Pivotal Decade in Canadian History*, (Harvest House, 1984): 39.

criticizing Ottawa's handling of the dispute and calling the federal government "a garrot which cuts off our political and cultural development."[10] René Lévesque himself, however, makes no mention of the conflict in either of his recent works, *My Quebec* and *Memoirs*,[11] and apart from Lépine francophone writers have been virtually mute on the subject. It may be that Québécois, who had largely accepted neo-nationalism by 1976 and had elected the Parti québécois in November of that year, do not consider the air traffic controllers' dispute the watershed issue that it seems to be in the eyes of English-speaking historians and writers.[12] An examination of the connection between the air traffic control conflict and the Parti québécois victory would be an interesting topic for further study, but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Other writers have made passing mention of the dispute's importance. Along with McRoberts' statements in *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, William Coleman in *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980* states that the conflict occurred because French did not function "as a standard language in Canada," particularly in the realm of

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[10]"Le fédéral et les gens de l'air," *L'Action nationale*, 66(1976-77): 67. My translation. All translations herein, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.
[11]René Lévesque, *My Quebec*, trans. Gaynor Fitzpatrick, (Toronto: Methuen, 1986). *Memoirs*, trans. Philip Stratford, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).
[12]see the analysis of the election in Maurice Pinard and Richard Hamilton, "The Parti Québécois Comes to Power: The 1976 Election," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 11,4(December 1978): 739-775.

scientific and technological literature.[13] As well, *Globe and Mail* correspondent Graham Fraser, in *PQ: René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power*, notes that the conflict "added to the sense that the Liberals had failed to protect the French language, either in Quebec or in Ottawa."[14]

The relationship between Canada's two founding peoples has been marked by crises which, however eventually resolved, have placed in doubt Quebec's place in Confederation. Whether schools disputes in Manitoba or Ontario or the conscription debacles of two World Wars, the conflicts between Canada's English- and French-speakers have often caused the latter to conclude that in the federal arrangement they were regarded as less than equal partners. The conflict over bilingual air traffic control was the most recent of these crises. But it is perhaps unique among them in that it occurred in the midst of a greater struggle, the struggle to consummate "the Frenchness of Quebec." The responses of English-speaking Canadians and their effect on MOT's implementation program helped to convince Québécois that the neo-nationalist direction they were taking was the right one. Finally, their own responses to the issue tell us that the "French Canada" they were fighting for existed for them only in Quebec.

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[13]William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984): 196.
[14]Graham Fraser, *PQ: René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1984): 62-63. See also George Radwanski, *Trudeau*, (Winnipeg: New American Library of Canada Limited, 1978): 308.

I. "The Fact that We Speak French"

The dispute over bilingual air traffic control in the summer of 1976 brought to the foreground in Quebec the fundamental question of whether Ottawa should or could be the protector of Québécois' language rights or if that responsibility more appropriately belonged to their provincial government. At that time both governments were taking concrete steps towards assuming that role, Ottawa through the Official Languages Act and Quebec through the Official Language Act, or Bill 22. However, it was clear by 1976 that Québécois had more confidence in their own government's ability to safeguard and enhance their right to speak French than they had in Ottawa. A look at socioeconomic and intellectual aspects of Quebec's history as it unfolded in the postwar years will help explain why and, moreover, will place the bilingual air traffic control dispute in its historical context.

The period from 1945 to 1960 was characterized by three phenomena. First, the ascendance of Keynesian economic theory brought with it the concept of the welfare state, which entailed increased involvement by the state in funding schemes such as unemployment insurance and social security. In Canada the federal government assumed the burden of developing and managing new social programs, and the result was the blurring of the delineation between federal and provincial fiscal responsibilities, a development which in Quebec raised new questions about the nature of Canadian

federalism and the role of Ottawa in Quebec's affairs. Secondly, the Union nationale government under Maurice Duplessis failed to take an active part in determining the direction and scope of the economic and social developments of the postwar period. Consequently, socioeconomic evolution in Quebec continued within the same pattern established at the outset of industrial development, that of a cultural-linguistic division of labour. French-speakers by and large played the roles of menials in their province's economy, while capital investment and ownership of major corporations remained in the hands of the anglophone elite. Moreover, a traditional nationalist ideology which defined the French-speaking people as essentially agrarian, Catholic, and francophone condoned and encouraged this economic structure, although the extent of industrial development since the turn of the century made this stratification increasingly evident and increasingly unacceptable to francophone Quebecers themselves. Finally, this period witnessed the decline of the Catholic Church as the foundation of French Canadian society. The secularization of labour unions, the social sciences being taught at francophone universities, and the emergence of a lay bureaucratic middle class trained to deal with the social problems of a modern industrial society together marked the beginning of the end of the Church's hold on the social and spiritual development of French-speaking Canadians.

These changes ultimately affected both Ottawa's and Quebec's language policies. In Quebec a unique situation had evolved. An entire ethnic group which made up a majority within the province was economically backward. In addition, it was presided over by a passive provincial government amid sweeping economic changes and under the shadow of an increasingly centralist federal government. This situation spawned two currents of political thought, the Citélibristes and neo-nationalists, whose main thrust was a critique of traditional nationalist ideology as well as analyses of the role of the Quebec and federal governments in the development of Quebec society.[15] Both groups agreed that nationalism as Quebec knew it had to go and that the state had to assume a major role in improving the economic status of francophone Quebecers. However, they disagreed as to how these ends might be accomplished, and the two language Acts studied here were eventual outcomes of their diverging ideas.

A major target of both the Citélibristes and the neo-nationalists was the traditional nationalist ideology of the 19th and early 20th centuries which had persisted into the fifties despite Quebec's economic transformation. One of its earliest exponents, Msgr. L.-A. Pâquet, writing in 1902, described French Canadians as a race with a "religious and civilizing mission":

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[15]This discussion of Citélibriste and neo-nationalist political thought is found in Behiels, chapters Two, Three, and Five.

> Our mission is less to handle capital than to stimulate ideas; less to light the furnaces of factories than to maintain and spread the glowing fires of religious thought. . . While our rivals are struggling for . . . the power that stems from industry and finance, our aspirations shall above all aim to uphold the honour of the doctrine and to gain the palms of apostleship.[16]

These "aspirations," moreover, would be realized through the continued hegemony of the Church and the family over the social and educational needs of the population. In practical terms, traditional nationalist thinkers from Pâquet to Abbé Groulx to Eduouard Montpetit, Olivar Asselin, Esdras Minville, and Richard Arès advocated colonization, small business, co-operatives, Catholic unions, and corporatism. At the same time they eschewed involvement by French-speaking Canadians in the urbanization and industrial expansion which was actually taking place.

The most prominent of the Citélibristes were Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier, co-editors of the periodical *Cité libre* that became the vehicle for their ideas, and Jean Marchand. Trudeau condemned the traditional nationalist thinkers for being detached from the reality of modern social problems, for interpreting Catholic social doctrine to support "authoritarianism and xenophobia"[17] in Quebec and for opposing the involvement of the federal and Quebec governments in solving the social problems inherent

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[16]Msgr. L.-A. Pâquet, "A Sermon on the Vocation of the French Race in America," *French Canadian Nationalism: An Anthology*, ed. Ramsay Cook, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969): 154.

[17]Pierre Elliott Trudeau, et al, *The Asbestos Strike*, (Toronto: J. Lewis & Samuel, 1974): 7.

in economic change. Trudeau believed that French Canadian nationalism was concocted in self-defense against "an English-speaking, Protestant, democratic, materialistic, commercial, and later industrial" environment and thereby "put a premium on all the contrary forces: the French language, Catholicism, authoritarianism, idealism, rural life, and later the return to the land."[18]

To combat francophone Quebecers' economic and intellectual backwardness, Trudeau and the Citélibristes adopted an anti-nationalist, liberal-democratic political philosophy. Specifically, they called for a "revolution of mentalities" which involved the separation of church and state, especially in the areas of social welfare and education, as well as a rejection of nationalism, which they believed to be fundamentally flawed because it placed the collective ahead of the individual and was therefore undemocratic.[19] The anti-nationalism of the Citélibristes is most clearly evident in their approach to federal and provincial politics in the wake of Ottawa's increasing centralism. They did not feel that the Canadian Constitution needed any substantial revisions to deal with this shift in the balance of power; on the contrary, they were convinced that Quebec had enough power without "special status" to deal with the most pressing problems of its citizens. Instead of turning inward to Quebec, Trudeau argued, Quebec's French-speakers could use the federal government

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[18]Trudeau, *Asbestos Strike*: 7.
[19]Behiels, Chapter Four.

structure to their economic advantage and learn to see Canada and not just Quebec as their homeland. He believed that Confederation had been designed to enable them to do so:

> The Canadian constitution created a country where French-speaking Canadians could compete on an equal basis with English Canadians; both groups were invited to consider the whole of Canada their country and field of endeavour.[20]

In Trudeau's view Ottawa would be the protector of francophones' rights, not Quebec City. But the Citélibristes and particularly Trudeau overestimated French-speaking Quebecers' willingness to recognize "the whole of Canada" as their Canada. Moreover, because of the Citélibristes' cynical conviction that democracy in Quebec was dead or dying, they failed to align themselves with the Quebec Liberal Party at the moment when it was poised to defeat the Union nationale. Thus, they did not become a political force in Quebec; instead Trudeau, Pelletier, and Marchand found a niche in Ottawa, becoming MPs in 1965, where liberal-democratic, anti-nationalist ideas eventually became the basis for the federal Liberal Party's position on Quebec, including its language policy.

The second group, the neo-nationalists, had their voice in the writings of Gérard Filion of *Le Devoir*; Jean-Marc Léger of *l'Action nationale*; University of Montreal historians Michel Brunet, Maurice Séguin, and Guy Frégault; and as well in the highly influential André Laurendeau.

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[20]Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968): 47.

Within the two periodicals and elsewhere they articulated an ideology which they believed represented the aspirations of all francophones in Quebec, including the growing working class. In Léger's words it was

> a doctrine which respected and safeguarded both the class and the nation, which created a situation whereby the worker felt that struggling for the national community no longer required the rejection of class solidarity. In short, a situation in which the worker did not feel obliged, in opting for his class, to abandon the nation.[21]

The neo-nationalists were responding to the same spectrum of change as were the Citélibristes, and like the Citélibristes, they based their ideology on a critique of traditional ideas about the nature of French Canadian society and about the role of the state and the church therein. Neo-nationalists, too, welcomed the modernizing effects of socioeconomic change, but unlike the Citélibristes, they were convinced that Quebec nationalism was an essential component of this change.[22] Needless to say, they did not hold the Citélibristes' notion of the Constitution. Rather they believed that Confederation was a compact between two nations, a theory most clearly outlined in the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems (the Tremblay report):

> The constitution of 1867 bears . . . the mark of this determination of the French Canadians to have themselves recognized as a distinct national group . . . Confederation was at one and the same time an agreement between the two principal national

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[21]Jean-Marc Léger, "Urgence d'une doctrine nationale," *l'Action nationale*, 32(dec. 1948): 268.
[22]Behiels 49.

groups, a compact between the provinces.[23]

In adhering to this idea of Confederation, some of the neo-nationalists took a pessimistic view of Quebec's future in Canada. Michel Brunet of the University of Montreal wrote that Confederation had indeed created a compact between "Canadians and canadiens." However, he contended that Ottawa had become "the national government of English Canada;"[24] consequently,

> French Canadians have only one government to which they may confidently entrust the safekeeping, defence, and enrichment of their culture and civilization. This is the government of the province of Quebec.[25]

André Laurendeau, on the other hand, adopted the position of the Tremblay report as a basis for his analysis of federalism as the product of a balance between the central powers and the local powers that could only be maintained by clearly delineating their respective jurisdictions and allowing each to be fully sovereign.[26] Laurendeau was a somewhat of a hybrid, a believer in both a strong bond between Ottawa and Quebec City and in the integrity of a French Canadian "nation" that had its home in Quebec. This nation's membership in Confederation was essential, Laurendeau insisted, because the French Canadian nation

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[23]*The Tremblay Report: Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems*, ed. David Kwavnik, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973): 114, 117.
[24]Michel Brunet, "Canadians and canadiens," *French Canadian Nationalism*, ed. Ramsay Cook, 291.
[25]Brunet 290.
[26]Michael Behiels and Ramsay Cook, Introduction, *The Essential Laurendeau*. (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1976).

could not survive unless Canada survived, and the greatest threat to Canadian survival was the creeping influence of American institutions and culture. Against this influence Laurendeau felt that French-speaking Canadians were "the best agents of resistance."[27]

Regardless of the degree to which they believed the two nations to be divided, neo-nationalists had great confidence in the ability of the Quebec state to be the best representative of the interests of its French-speaking people. Thus, the catch phrase of neo-nationalists was "provincial autonomy," and the vehicle by which the provincial government would develop a fuller role was the Liberal Party, undergoing a revitalization in the late fifties under Jean Lesage. Neo-nationalists made up the reform wing of the party, and their ideas became the foundation for its political platform when it contested the election of 1960. Part of that platform involved a language policy which would enhance francophones' participation in the upper echelons of Quebec's economic life.

Among the major reforms proposed by the Liberal Party was state intervention in the areas of education, social services and resource development. Most importantly, though, the Liberals advocated increased provincial autonomy so that Quebec, not Ottawa, could be the *moteur principal* in carrying out the reforms. Jean Lesage outlined the party's rationale thus:

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[27]André Laurendeau, "Vision and Blindness," *The Essential Laurendeau*, ed. Behiels and Cook: 193.

> Autonomy . . . constitutes the primary foundation of our development as a distinct ethnic group. The province of Quebec, because of its faith, its ethnic composition, and its traditions, is not in the same situation as the other provinces . . . Our policies in the area of federal-provincial relations must be audacious, progressive, dynamic, and above all, positive.[28]

The party platform brought success to Lesage and the Liberals in 1960, and its implementation resulted in the constellation of development and change known as the Quiet Revolution. Ministries of education and cultural affairs were established, as was a network of government-sponsored industries, such as the expanded Hydro-Québec, which were eventually managed solely by francophones. Furthermore, invoking the slogan "masters in our own house," the Lesage government established the Caisse de Dépôt, sought and won more autonomy from Ottawa for establishing the province's own social programs while continuing to obtain federal funding, and successfully negotiated for a larger share of tax revenues. His initiatives exacerbated the tensions between Quebec and Ottawa. During the sixties the distinction between the two jurisdictions became increasingly vague, and there was seemingly no clear end in sight to Quebec's push for autonomy.[29] In protecting the interests and the aspirations of its people, Quebec, it seemed, was attempting to extend its jurisdiction more and more into areas traditionally held by Ottawa.

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[28]Jean Lesage, quoted in Behiels 263-4.
[29]For a detailed discussion of the issue on provincial autonomy, see McRoberts, *Quebec* 111-114.

With the concrete changes taking place in the early sixties came a symbolic change in the tenor of nationalism. "Agrarian" and "Catholic" were expunged from the definition of French Canadian "character," francophone Quebecers having carved out a niche for themselves in the material world and under the guidance of the state rather than the church. The only distinguishing characteristic left was the French language; consequently, it attained increasing political significance during and following the period of the Quiet Revolution. Through its educational reforms and support of economic initiatives the Lesage government raised the expectations of both working and middle class francophones, yet the Liberal program fell short of fulfilling those expectations. Anglophones still dominated the private sector, and even by the seventies only 20 of the 100 largest enterprises in Quebec were francophone-controlled.[30] As well, these firms preferred to hire English-speakers for managerial positions in spite of the increased technical and academic qualifications of the francophone population. Thus, by 1969, for example, only 12.7 percent of University of Montreal graduates were employed in Quebec's private sector, and francophones in managerial positions within this sector tended to be on the low end of the pay scale.[31]

Aggravating this problem was the question of the language preference of other-language immigrants to Quebec. Specifically, they preferred English and sent their children

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[30]McRoberts, *Quebec* 126.
[31]McRoberts, *Quebec* 128.

to English-language schools. Francophone Quebecers perceived, and demographic studies conducted at the time seemed to confirm, that the tendency of immigrants to choose English over French posed a long-term threat to the survival of the French language in Quebec.[32] Francophones' attempts to participate fully in economic development were making rather obvious the fact that the French language was a barrier to their efforts. It followed that the state's next initiative towards making them masters in their own house should be directed towards protecting and promoting the French language. If language was at the core of francophone grievances, the resolution of those grievances had to be found in language legislation. Thus, the two major provincially-appointed commissions dealing with language, those of Parent and Gendron, were logical outcomes of the neo-nationalists' conviction that the Quebec state was the guarantor of francophone Quebecers' language rights and ultimately of their survival as a people. Although the Lesage Liberals were defeated in 1966, the Union nationale and Liberal administrations which succeeded them made provincial autonomy and the development of a language policy priorities during their tenures.

The Parti québécois was also a logical development of the neo-nationalist tenor of Quebec politics. Confidence in the Quebec state was at the heart of neo-nationalism, and provincial autonomy was the political expression of that

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[32]McRoberts, *Quebec* 132.

confidence. Some adamant reformists of the Quebec Liberal Party asked that Quebec wrest the maximum autonomy possible from Ottawa and become a separate state. Lesage preferred to maintain the province's place in the federal system, but a disgruntled René Lévesque, who had been a cabinet minister in Lesage's government, left the Quebec Liberal Party and became the founder ot the Parti québécois. Provincial autonomy entailed at the very least, said Lévesque, "a massive transfer of fiscal resources."

> In particular, the Quebec government must obtain the greatest advantages and royalties it can possibly extract from the exploitation of natural resources . . . agriculture, industry, and commerce.[33]

This prescription for the fiscal restructuring of Quebec's and Ottawa's jurisdictions does not differ substantially, in spirit at least, from policies advocated by the Liberal Party. Yet to Lévesque its implications were obvious.

In spite of their shortcomings as far as René Lévesque and other indépendantistes were concerned, the Liberal Party's programs were alarming to the Citélibristes. Trudeau believed that increased autonomy for Quebec was a threat to Confederation and that in order to contain Quebec's ambitious push for provincial autonomy, the federal government had to develop policies aimed at strengthening Quebec's place in Confederation and that of francophone minorities outside the province. "The most effective way to heal nationalist alienation," he and Pelletier wrote, "is to

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[33]René Lévesque, *An Option for Quebec*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968): 23, 24.

establish a better regime."[34] That had been their goal when Trudeau, Pelletier, and Marchand went to Ottawa as the three francophone "wise men." Upon becoming Prime Minister in 1968, Trudeau began his efforts to consolidate Ottawa's position as the government of French Canada and thereby dilute the effects of Quebec nationalism. His first and most significant step in that direction was to develop a language policy based upon his own notion of Canadian federalism. "Masters in our own house we must be," he said in 1968, "but our house is the whole of Canada."[35] And a study co-chaired by André Laurendeau provided the basis for Trudeau's major language legislation, the Official Languages Act. Laurendeau's support for an integral Quebec nation within Confederation had resulted in his advocating and taking part in the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the hope that the commission would find ways to enable the central government to better represent both "national" entities on an equal footing. The terms of reference of the commission, struck during Pearson's tenure as prime minister, were:

> to inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races . . .[36]

The commission uncovered all of the inequities later noted

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[34]Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier. *Cité libre*, October 1965, quoted in Radwanski 79.
[35]quoted in Radwanski 286.
[36]*Bilingualism and Biculturalism: An Abridged Version of the Royal Commission Report*, ed. Hugh R. Innis, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973): Foreword.

by the Quebec-appointed Gendron commission. Francophone Quebecers had to be bilingual in order to advance in their careers even in their own province, and even then their earnings fell short of those of their anglophone colleagues. Moreover, in federal institutions French-speakers were grossly under-represented. The commission's report recommended that federal institutions become officially bilingual as a means of enabling francophones to have a stronger voice there and thus achieve the equal partnership the B & B Commission called for. It recognized, however, that French had to become the "principal" language within Quebec itself.

Laurendeau's ideas, which were visible in the commission's report, thus represent a link between Trudeau's anti-nationalist federalism and the neo-nationalists. Trudeau eventually advocated official bilingualism because he believed it would provide a means of enabling francophones in Quebec to expand their perception of the "patrie" to include all of Canada. Laurendeau, however, felt that institutional bilingualism would make federal institutions more accessible, thereby increasing the appeal Confederation had for French-speaking Quebecers and strengthening the compact between the two nations.

Trudeau's perception of French Canadians' aspirations was enshrined in the Official Languages Act of 1969. The main thrust of the Act was to give French and English equal status in federal institutions:

> The English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada, and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada.[37]

But Trudeau's dislike of nationalism seems to have coloured his perception of his ability to defeat it. There were concrete circumstances and events in Quebec which kept nationalist sentiment alive, and two critical factors in the relations between Ottawa and Quebec and between anglophones and francophones within Quebec virtually guaranteed the failure of Trudeau's language policy before it was ever enacted. First, he became prime minister in 1968, eight years after the onset of change in Quebec. Thus, francophone Quebecers had had eight years to witness an interventionist Quebec state in action, and whatever its limitations the Quebec state put in place by the Lesage Liberals had expanded economic opportunities for many and had raised the expectations of almost all of Quebec's French-speakers. In doing so, it had called into question the very nature of federal-provincial responsibilities, ultimately forcing a shift in the weight of those responsibilities from Ottawa to Quebec City. Thus, the rhetoric of neo-nationalism was accompanied by concrete actions, however limited, which seemed by many to substantiate Lesage's claim that the Quebec state, not Ottawa, was "the instrument of [the]

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[37] *Official Languages Act*, section 2, *Revised Statutes of Canada 1985*, Vol. VI, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada, 1985).

cultural, economic, and social development"[38] of French Canadians. It was indeed not a coincidence that during the period of the Quiet Revolution francophone Quebecers began to call themselves "Québécois" instead of "Canadiens."[39] It seems evident that by 1968 Trudeau's belief that these Québécois could be made to regard all of Canada as their homeland was a chimerical one. Not only had the Quebec state demonstrated the benefits of positive action, but it had done so in an atmosphere of escalating confrontation with Ottawa; the result of which was a like escalation of Québécois' sense of alienation from the federal government, a confirmation of the neo-nationalists' perception that Ottawa represented English-speakers first.

Secondly, because the Official Languages Act granted equal status to the French and English languages, its implementation could not resolve the most difficult aspect of Quebec's economic structure, that of the cultural division of labour.[40] Québécois' nationalism was based as much on the real problem of the economic limitations of the French language as it was on the more ephemeral issues of identity and self-defense. However, the Official Languages Act was insufficient and even antithetical to providing solutions to this problem in Quebec. The Act provided that minorities of either official language be given access to education and be permitted to work in federal institutions

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[38]quoted in André Laurendeau, "A State of Our Own," *The Essential Laurendeau*, ed. Cook and Behiels 181.
[39]McRoberts, *Quebec* 130.
[40]McRoberts, "Bill 22" 468 ff.

in the language of their choice. This provision meant that francophones outside of Quebec would see their opportunities to live and work in their mother tongue increased, but it also meant that anglophones and other-language immigrants in Quebec would enjoy the same privileges. Consequently, they could continue to choose the language of instruction for their children, which, because of Quebec's economic structure, would be English. Anglophones could also continue to use English as the language of work in an economy which they had dominated for almost two hundred years, and thereby constrain Québécois to communicate with them on the job in English.

The only way to change these conditions was to give French in Quebec not an equal status but a preferred status as a language of instruction in schools, of immigrant assimilation, and of work.[41] Of course, there was no means by which to realize this end that did not include truncating the rights of the anglophone and immigrant minorities, but Québécois' reaction to attempts by their government to protect those rights indicated that they expected the state to look after francophone interests first. The most telling example of Québécois' sentiments in this regard occurred in the wake of the passage of Bill 63 in November of 1969. Entitled An Act to Promote the French Language, Bill 63 was actually designed to entrench in law the right of immigrants to choose the language of instruction for their children.

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[41]McRoberts, "Bill 22" 470.

Passage of the Bill resulted, in one instance, in a demonstration by 50,000 people in front of the Quebec legislature.[42]

Despite their stubborn resistance to Québécois' demands for a more substantive promotion of the French language, the Union nationale under Johnson and Bertrand did recognize a need to deal with linguistic concerns in Quebec. Consequently, a commission headed by Jean-Denis Gendron was formed in 1969 "to examine ways of ensuring the full expansion of the French language in Quebec."[43] The major questions tackled under this mandate included:

> The question of French as the language of work, the integration of new Quebecers into the French-speaking community of Quebec, and the language rights of our fellow citizens [as well as] . . . the teaching of French as the mother tongue and as a second language . . . language practices and usage in the organization of services, the place of French in entertainment, information and advertising, the demographic aspects of the language problem, and finally, the quality of the language.[44]

This mandate represented perhaps one of the most concerted attempts to that date to analyze the status of French within the context of Quebec's unique socioeconomic structure.

The Gendron commission's statistics, published in 1972, indicated what Québécois wanting job mobility already knew: a unilingual anglophone earned more, per capita, than a

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[42]McRoberts, *Quebec* 162.
[43]Quebec, Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Position of the French Language and on Language Rights in Quebec, *Book II: Language Rights*, (Quebec: Government of Quebec, 1972): 8.
[44]Quebec, Position of the French Language, *Book I: The Language of Work*, (Quebec: Government of Quebec, 1972):3.

bilingual francophone, and a unilingual francophone was very near the bottom of the economic scale. Moreover, anglophones in Quebec lived in splendid isolation, with a "double network" of institutions and services which gave them virtual social autonomy. They had no need to learn French, either for survival or advancement, in the province of Quebec. Francophone Quebecers, however, still required a knowledge of English in order to be upwardly mobile. Except in the newly created government enterprises and in the bureaucracy itself, the first language of the more skilled areas of employment, particularly in the private sector, was English. Moreover, in the absence of government initiatives to redress this situation, English was likely to remain essential to advancement in the work world.[45]

The Gendron commission's recommendations emphasized the francization of the workplace and of other-language immigrants. Moreover, the Gendron report concluded that the "collective leverage" with which to accomplish these feats must be positive action by the Quebec state. The state should strive, the report stated,

> to make French the working language of French-speaking people . . . to make French the common language of oral communication between French and English speaking people; and . . . to make French the language of written communication in the work milieux.[46]

With respect to the question of immigrant assimilation, the report called for the government of Quebec to adhere to the

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[45]Quebec, *The Language of Work* 109-143.
[46]Quebec, *The Language of Work* 290 ff.

same objective of "the full expansion of the French language."

The response to the report and to the Québécois' obvious dissatisfaction over previous legislation dealing with the language of instruction of immigrant children was Bill 22, the Official Language Act, passed in July 1974 by the Liberal administration under Premier Robert Bourassa. This legislation was the first attempt to define in law the status of French in Quebec,[47] and its preamble indicated an ambitious agenda:

> It is incumbent upon the government of the province of Quebec to employ every means in its power to ensure the preeminence of [the French language] and to promote its vigour and quality.[48]

"Every means" in the government's power included the promotion of the language in the civil service, and "at every level of business activity." Furthermore, in what looks almost like a rebuttal of the key provision of the Official Languages Act, Bill 22 proclaimed that French would be "the official language of the province of Quebec."[49]

In actuality, Bill 22 was more sound and fury than substance. Bourassa had a significant stake in keeping the goodwill of the anglophone business community, and the timourous provisions for the francization of the workplace reflected that group's political clout. While it would certainly encourage the francization of private business by withholding government contracts from unilingual anglophone

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[47]McRoberts, *Quebec* 172.
[48]Quebec, *Official Language Act*, Preamble.
[49]*Official Language Act*, Title I(1)

businesses that were unwilling to change their ways, the Bill set no time limits for the transition to French in the workplace and offered "provisional" francization certificates to businesses showing good intentions. The Bill also left ambiguous loopholes, permitting the scope of change to be determined by "the situation and structure of each firm, of its head office, and of its subsidiaries and branches."[50]

Yet the comprehensive nature of Bill 22, dealing with the questions of the language of work, of instruction, and of immigrant assimilation, was unique in Quebec's legislative efforts to that period. No other legislation had attempted to protect the French language by addressing Quebec's socioeconomic status quo, which was singular in Canada. In no other province did a minority enjoy a higher standard of living, more lucrative employment opportunities, or an infrastructure of services and institutions to obviate any need for its assimilation into the majority. Bill 22's provisions for the francization of the workplace and of immigrants were tentative steps towards changing that situation. They were also an affirmation that henceforth Québécois could look to their own government for language legislation designed to enable them to live and work in French in their own province.

Quebec's escalating demands for provincial autonomy had raised the question of how much autonomy would be sufficient

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[50]*Official Language Act*, III(28) and (29).

to enable the Quebec state to meet Québécois' aspirations.[51] Similarly, the escalating demands for positive action by the state to promote the French language at the expense of non-francophones raised the question of what efforts should be made to protect and promote the French language. Both questions, however, ultimately addressed the nature of federalism. Was Canada a compact of two de facto sovereign nations, one English-speaking and one French-speaking? Bill 22 fitted logically into that assumption; it recognized Québécois as a majority and took measures to ensure that French would become and remain the predominant language in Quebec. Or was Canada a federation with a strong central government committed to equal rights for linguistic minorities? If so, the Official Languages Act was the most appropriate legislation for seeing to those rights, and Bill 22 was indeed "politically stupid,"[52] By 1976 it was apparent that the neo-nationalist definition of Canada had found support among Québécois, a fact which was acknowledged even by the federalist Claude Ryan, publisher of *Le Devoir*:

> Québécois have nourished themselves on negative self-government and vague dreams of survival for a long time; now they are better aware of their identity and since 1960 have more clearly realized that their destiny is linked to the rise of the state of Quebec.[53]

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[51]McRoberts, *Quebec* 143.
[52]Pierre Elliott Trudeau, quoted in MacDonald 31.
[53]Claude Ryan, "Faut-il réélir le gouvernement Trudeau?" *Le Devoir*, 25 October 1972: 4.

Reactions to Bill 22, especially those within Quebec, demonstrate that Quebecers, many of them anglophone, acknowledged Confederation to be a compact, two nations upholding a shaky truce, perhaps, within the Canadian federation. Defining the constitutional arrangement this way meant that the rights of non-francophones might very well continue to be eroded piecemeal, as was happening through legislation such as Bill 22, in order to advance the cause of the Québécois "nation." The final outcome might even be the unilingual, sovereign state that the Parti québécois was advocating.

This thrust towards the predominance or even exclusivity of the French language in Quebec was noted by anglophone commentators at the peak of the air traffic controllers' dispute. Interestingly enough, some evidence suggests that in spite of the overwhelming condemnation of the Bill's provisions by the non-francophone community, many acknowledged that change was inevitable. One commentator, a former Montrealer, provided this assessment:

> Canada . . . is very much a state of two major peoples. To deny that seems to deny the fundamental social character of this country. . . . To realize it is to entertain a proposition such as "Quebec is a province unlike the others" with equanimity. . . . English Canada . . . must come to recognize Quebec for what it is and what its majority seems to want it to be: an essentially French community, granting the rights of its English minority.[54]

Columnist Charles Lynch, writing in the *Montreal Gazette*, went even further, calling Bill 22 a watershed in Quebec's

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[54]Bob Cohen, "Quebec anglophones beginning to change," *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 June 1976: 7.

relations with Ottawa:

> Once Bill 22 became law, it started eroding the underpinnings of Canadian nationhood as we had known it . . . A loosening of the federate bonds [is] the answer . . . the central authority must cease resisting pressures from the regions.[55]

And finally, the *Montreal Gazette* succinctly summed up the ambitions of Bill 22's authors:

> The language of work is to be increasingly French and anybody who intends to work here will need to communicate in the office, department store, and factory in French. All major parties agree with the direction in this part of the Official Language Act.[56]

Anglophones' acceptance of the seemingly unavoidable was not lost on their francophone compatriots. For example, Maurice Forget, the head of the Quebec government's French language board, noted in comments to the *Montreal Star* that the change in attitudes had extended even to the controversial area of the language of work. "Many companies," he remarked, "seem to realize that it is in their own interest to co-operate with the Official Language Law."[57]

But with respect to language policy, the central authority, Trudeau's Ottawa, was certainly not ceasing its resistance to pressure from Quebec. For example, the francization certificates required by Bill 22, which were provided to businesses successfully converting to conducting their affairs in French and which were a prerequisite to

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[55]Charles Lynch, "B & B Commission's crisis has grown," *Montreal Gazette*, 3 July 1976: 5.
[56]Irwin Block, "The francization of business proceeds, marked by goodwill," *Montreal Gazette*, 25 October 1976: 9.
[57]Ken Whittingham, "English attitudes 'deeply changed'," *Montreal Star*, 23 June 1976: 4.

these businesses' receiving government grants, applied to federal Crown corporations operating in Quebec. In what seems to have been an attempt to undermine Bill 22, the federal government asked its Crown corporations not to apply for the certificates. A *Montreal Star* editorial noted that Ottawa's Official Languages Act and Quebec's Bill 22 were working towards the same end, the achievement of linguistic justice for Québécois, but in refusing to seek the certificates, Ottawa once again appeared to be attempting to thwart efforts to make French the language of work in Quebec.[58] And each attempt encouraged Québécois, although they seemed to need little persuading, to turn to the provincial government for protection.[59]

Nowhere did the clash between official languages and official language, between Trudeau's idea of federalism and Quebec's desire for autonomy, become so volatile as in the air traffic controllers' dispute. Here, there should have been no question about Ottawa's intentions: the Official Languages Act was to be progressively implemented in Quebec's air traffic system, and that move was supposed to give francophone controllers as well as the growing numbers of unilingual francophone pilots of small aircraft the opportunity to work in their own language. The implementation of the Act in this instance also should have

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[58]"Ottawa and Bill 22," editorial, *Montreal Star*, 13 July 1976: A6.

[59]Gretta Chambers, "Political parties are unable to fly right as aviation's bilingualism row continues," *Montreal Gazette*, 24 July 1976: 3.

given the federal government the opportunity to prove to Québécois that Ottawa was indeed the guarantor of their linguistic rights, that they did not need Bill 22 or special status or the Parti québécois.

Instead, the dispute became a climactic chapter in the development of the rift between Quebec and federal system. Certainly a major reason for that development was the vocal resistance of anglophone controllers and pilots to the government's plan and the vocal and obnoxious support they received from anglophone bigots in the rest of Canada. But perhaps the fundamental reason for the way the dispute unfolded was its timing in relation to the developments we have been discussing. By 1976 Québécois had already by and large accepted the neo-nationalist definition of their province's place in Confederation. Within this definition, the federal government had a very limited role, its position made even more tenuous by the fact that there was as yet no consensus among Québécois as to how far its limits should extend. And Bill 22 seemed to indicate that the federal government's role as protector of the French fact in Quebec's political life would become more and more constrained.

At the same time, rather than enabling Québécois to recognize the usefulness of the federal system for that purpose and to expand their idea of home to include the whole of Canada, the process of implementing the federal bilingualism policy in air traffic control only helped to

confirm in their eyes that Ottawa was the government of English-speaking Canada and thus could never unequivocally represent the interests of French-speakers in Quebec. It was probably inevitable that implementation would be a slow and obstacle-laden process, but each time Ottawa balked in its handling of the dispute, it seemed to Québécois to be interfering in the process which had begun during the Quiet Revolution and was now moving inexorably forward. That process was exactly what Trudeau had feared, a process whereby Québécois were turning inward to their own province, which included developing their own language policy without reference to Trudeau's notion of federalism.

In 1976, then, both the federal and Quebec governments were in the midst of trying out policies designed to improve the status of the French language. The federal Official Languages Act recognized English and French as Canada's official languages while Quebec's Official Language Act, Bill 22, made French the only official language in Quebec. While the aim of both laws was to protect the French language and, in Quebec, to enhance its use, there were conflicting assumptions underlying the enactment of each. The federal government under Pierre Trudeau passed the Official Languages Act in part to prove to Québécois that Ottawa could guarantee them full linguistic equality within the federal system. The Quebec government under Robert Bourassa, however, drafted Bill 22 because it believed that only the province could be trusted to be guarantors of

Québécois' language rights, and then only by giving the French language a preferred status in Quebec.

The conflict over which government was or should be the protector of these rights climaxed in the summer of 1976 with the dispute over Ottawa's attempts to implement the bilingualism policy in Quebec's air traffic system. The air traffic controllers' dispute provided the forum through which Quebec's claim to be the protector of Québécois' language rights was articulated and through which alternatives were argued by an Ottawa increasingly on the defensive. And the outcome seemed to indicate that Québécois would henceforth choose the neo-nationalist idea of federalism -- if they chose federalism at all -- which had room in Quebec for only one official language. What confidence Québécois still had in Ottawa during this period would be severely shaken, and along with it their willingness to accept the Citélibriste formula for Canadian unity and the language policy which had stemmed from it. The words of Quebec Liberal cabinet minister Fernand Lalonde perhaps best demonstrate what the dispute would come to mean to Québécois. "I give the government's full support to the francophone controllers," he said, "and I do it in the name of the Official Language Act."[60]

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[60]quoted in Dave Thomas, "Air language war 'racism': Lalonde," *Montreal Gazette*, 21 May 1976: 1.

II. "Politicians Have No Place in the Cockpits of the Nation's Airlines"

Because by 1976 Québécois were looking to their own government to expand and protect their language rights, whatever efforts the federal government made in this direction were bound to be regarded with some cynicism. Thus, attempts by the Ministry of Transport on Ottawa's behalf to implement the federal language policy in Quebec's air traffic system were handicapped at the outset. This situation was further complicated, however, by two considerations. First, whether bilingual air traffic control would be safe or not had never been conclusively determined, yet MOT seemed to assume that safety and French were compatible. Related to this assumption was the fact that MOT played two conflicting roles in the controversy: it was both instrument of the policy of official bilingualism and regulatory body responsible for safety in the aviation industry. Unfortunately, it could not perform either of these functions without compromising the integrity of the other. As a policy implementer MOT had to modify some regulations to suit the policy, which raised questions about its commitment to air safety. As a regulatory body, on the other hand, MOT was often reluctant to change any language-related rules that might conceivably cause a deterioration in aviation safety standards, and its hesitation raised questions about Ottawa's commitment to linguistic rights for Québécois. As a result, MOT lost its credibility both as a policy implementer and regulatory

body.

The dispute between anglophone and francophone airmen was focused on two considerations. The first was that of implementing bilingual air traffic control under both Visual Flight Rules (VFR), those utilized by smaller, mainly noncommercial aircraft, and Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), those utilized by commercial airlines. The second concern was that while Quebec's smaller strips were exclusively VFR, larger centres handled a mixture of both VFR and IFR flights, and the use of French in these mixed control environments was a source of consternation for anglophone pilots and controllers. Few anglophone representatives of either the pilots' or the controllers' organizations insisted on English-only VFR control at strictly VFR strips in Quebec, nor did anyone from a francophone airmen's group seriously suggest that bilingual air traffic control should be implemented beyond Quebec's borders, except perhaps at Ottawa. Ironically, all three of the airmen's organizations -- the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association (CATCA), the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association (CALPA), and l'Association des gens de l'air du Québec (AGAQ) -- believed that in an ideal situation all flights would be controlled in only one language, which history and present conditions dictated would be English. All three acknowledged, however, that the world of aviation was not ideal and that compromise was therefore both necessary and desirable. Conflict arose over just how far actual practice should stray from the

ideal of a unilingual air traffic system.

Easily the most idealistic of Canadian airmen were the anglophone and even some francophone professional pilots who were members of the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association (CALPA). Their position with respect to safety and bilingualism took them no further than to acknowledge a need for limited extension of bilingual control to some VFR flights in Quebec:

> CALPA is not opposed to the introduction of French into ATC under Visual Flight Rules at many of the airports in Quebec, provided that acceptable criteria can be worked out for the designation of such bilingual airports.[61]

One of these acceptable criteria was a complete absence of traffic mix: "Where IFR and VFR traffic come under the same control, single language ATC must be retained."[62] The other stipulated that under IFR it was "unnecessary and retrograde to introduce another language."[63] In other words, bilingual air traffic control was fine with anglophone members of CALPA but only at those airports exclusively utilizing Visual Flight Rules, which effectively ruled out major airports such as Quebec City and Dorval, as well as several smaller ones such as Saint-Jean, Sept-Îles, and Baie Comeau.[64]

English-speaking members of the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association (CATCA) showed a greater willingness to

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[61]Capt. J.R. Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious, Political Control of Air Traffic," *Pilot*, Spring 1976: 11.
[62]Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious" 11.
[63]Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious" 11.
[64]Capt. J.R. Desmarais, "The Pilots [sic] Room," *Pilot*, Winter 1975, 23.

modify the ideal of an English-only air traffic system. Interviewed in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, representatives of the association claimed that they did not object

> to bilingual operations limited to the province of Quebec and in VFR, if a French-speaking-only pilot is not permitted to fly outside the province.[65]

Although they stipulated that bilingual control must be confined to VFR, CATCA's anglophone members did not, unlike CALPA's, rule out the use of French in a mixed environment. Allowing a second language under those conditions was, CATCA pointed out, simply acknowledging the reality of many of Quebec's airports, one of the more disquieting aspects of which was "flying NORDO;" that is, flying without radio contact. Apparently, this was a regular practice in situations where a unilingual francophone pilot was unable to communicate with an Engligh-speaking controller. A CATCA official explained the situation this way:

> We have a lot of pilots flying around here who speak only French . . . It's either these guys fly into your airport without communications or else you try and control them in French . . . It's safer to talk to them in French and try to control them than to . . . let them zoom around uncontrolled.[66]

In sum, CALPA argued that only under VFR at a strictly VFR-controlled strip would bilingual air traffic control be safe. CATCA differed somewhat, allowing that the use of French in a mixed environment, albeit only by pilots flying

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[65]Charles E. Schneider, "Canadian Air Traffic Control Language Impasse Eases," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 8 September 1975: 26.
[66]quoted in Schneider 27.

under VFR, would adequately meet safety standards.

The discrepancy in anglophone pilots' and controllers' respective notions of air safety stemmed mainly from their perceptions of the importance of the "listening watch," which refers to pilots' keeping tabs on radio messages between controllers and other pilots in their vicinity.[67] By doing so, pilots ostensibly would know the locations of other aircraft nearby and would thereby be able to point out any errors to controllers or other pilots. CALPA's official position was that with bilingual control unilingual aviation personnel would be unable to comprehend some of the messages, thereby reducing the efficacy of the listening watch as a safety net. Airline pilots believed that they as well as the controllers were responsible for the separation of aircraft. As CALPA president Ken Maley told the *Toronto Star*, "the captain has to know what is happening in the air space around his plane." Maley added that to reject that idea was to imply that the responsibility for separation rested entirely with the controller and to assume that controllers were "infallible." "We all know they are not," he concluded.[68] Another commercial pilot later pointed out that the Aeronautics Act

> accords the captain of an aircraft the ultimate responsibility for its safety . . . and requires that he take whatever action he deems necessary to avoid jeopardy.[69]

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[67] see Borins 31-36.
[68] "They don't talk the same language," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 23 May 1976: 6.
[69] J.J. Green, "We simply must listen to what pilots have to say," *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 July 1976: 6.

But controllers, whether anglophone or francophone, did not place the same emphasis on the need for pilot comprehension of "the total picture." CATCA adhered to the principle of ground-based or "positive" control. Positive control was the outcome of the increased technological complexity of modern air traffic systems, which enabled pilots to fly under conditions in which they could no longer maintain visual separation; such conditions necessitated a shift in responsibility for aircraft separation from pilot to controller. Consequently, CATCA more readily accepted the use of French in a mixed environment, its members believing that safe management of an air traffic system rested with controllers much more so than with pilots.

The francophone airmen's organization, l'Association des gens de l'air du Québec (AGAQ), came into being precisely because of its members' opposition to CALPA's and CATCA's positions on the question of air safety. The francophone pilots and controllers belonging to CATCA and CALPA first banded together as l'Association québécoise des contrôleurs de la navigation aérienne (AQCNA) in 1974. Later, as the issue became more critical and their alienation from their parent unions more acute, they welcomed all francophones employed in the aviation industry into the umbrella organization AGAQ. The francophone pilots and controllers also founded their perception of safety on ground-based control, but unlike CATCA's anglophone members, AGAQ believed that this position justified the full

expansion of bilingual control into air traffic services in Quebec. In a memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Transport in October of 1975, AGAQ noted that historically, almost complete recourse to positive control had become a desirable objective once the use of radio had replaced signal lights for landing and take-off. It so happened, the memorandum continued, that the mandatory use of radio-telephony coincided with an increase in the number of unilingual francophone pilots, who because of the language barrier were restricted either to using the radio in French or flying NORDO. Consequently, it had never been possible in the province of Quebec for all pilots to make use of the listening watch, and therefore the English-only dictum did not correspond "to the sociological reality of [Quebec's] aviation milieu."[70] The use of a single language was admittedly the ideal situation, but francophone airmen contended that in a complex and polyglot world, it was also a situation that was untenable. The only safe alternative was a move to strictly positive control, and the only safe positive control was bilingual control, giving the choice of language to the pilot:

> In the actual system, air traffic control is based upon the judgment of the controller . . . Comprehension between the pilot concerned and the controller is the cornerstone upon which rests the whole edifice. That is why bilingualism, which gives the choice of language to the pilot, enhances safety.[71]

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[70]L'Association des gens de l'air du Québec, "Le bilinguisme dans les communications air-sol au Québec," Montreal, *La Presse*, 16 October 1975: A4.
[71]AGAQ, "Le bilinguisme"

Since they believed pilot-controller comprehension to be fundamental to safety under both VFR and IFR conditions, most francophone airmen did not distinguish between the two sets of rules. As for the listening watch, they called it "outmoded." "The sole means which permits a pilot to detect an error," explained AGAQ's memo, "is his eyes." One spokesperson later discounted its utility specifically in the IFR context:

> A pilot flying on instruments in zero visibility is entirely in the hands of air traffic control and must obey the instructions given to him with absolute confidence in the skill of the controllers. He does *not* need to know what directions are being given to other aircraft.[72]

Thus, les gens de l'air's perception of what constituted safe air traffic control diverged from the commonly held ideal of an English-only system more so than did the perceptions of anglophone members of either CALPA or CATCA. CALPA's English-speaking pilots would often claim that the francophone airmen were threatening the eventual realization of the ideal with their "retrograde" steps towards bilingual skies. Les gens de l'air readily countered, however, that their position was the more realistic and consequently safer than either the "grand dream" espoused by English-speaking pilots or the half-measures begrudgingly sanctioned by English-speaking controllers.[73] The technological complexities of modern

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[72]Jean Le Menach, "'Bilingual air traffic control is essential'," *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 July 1976: 6.
[73]Maurice Baribeau, "Flight safety vs. language," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 July 1976: 4.

aviation dictated that the pilot pass some of his responsibilities on to the controller. In doing so, he had to discard his image of independence and self-importance, an attractive and romantic image and one likely forged from the wartime origins of his profession; hence francophone controller Pierre Beaudry's remark:

> Something is at stake that not many laymen know about, namely the responsibility of each occupation, the pilot's and the controller's . . . The responsibility [for maintaining separation between aircraft] is now in the hands of the controller and it is high time that everyone acknowledged it.[74]

Les gens de l'air further defended their position by claiming that it was the fruit of experience:

> Daily experience proved to the controller in Quebec that bilingualism was a safety measure because it ensured a clear understanding between himself and the pilot, an understanding fundamental to air safety.[75]

Moreover, Maurice Baribeau, a former member of MOT and a Montreal-based pilot, claimed that "lives have undoubtedly been saved" by the use of French. After all, he concluded, "safety is not the sole prerogative of English-speaking people. All races on this earth should have access to safety services."[76]

The argument over the utility of the listening watch engendered the most serious objections to the use of French in air traffic control in Quebec, but there were other contentious issues as well. Anglophone members of both CALPA

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[74]Pierre Beaudry, speech delivered at the Special Symposium on Air Traffic Control, quoted in Borins 88.
[75]Roger Demers, "'Bilingualism is realistic,'" Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 8 July 1976: 7.
[76]Baribeau, "Flight safety"

and CATCA, for example, agreed that bilingual control was "less safe" because it would add to the already heavy workload of controllers:

> Controllers in busy towers . . . may be maintaining a mental picture of the identification, altitude, routing and position of 10 or more aircraft at one time. Introduction of a second language will mean they must remember which of them speaks French and which English.[77]

Additionally, bilingual controllers might also have to translate and to switch back and forth between French and English. Any of these added tasks were thought by unilingual anglophone airmen to be too difficult for the average controller, although they cited no studies to support their conclusions.[78] Moreover, English-speakers of both CALPA and CATCA contended that French at either Dorval or Mirabel was undesirable because these two airports allegedly handled a heavier flow of traffic than did any bilingual airport in Europe. This assertion, too, was not supported by empirical data; nevertheless, anglophone pilots pointed to Canada's "huge numbers of small private planes" (13,448 reported in the *Globe and Mail*; 16,500 according to the *Vancouver Sun*) as a phenomenon unique to North America. This situation was futher complicated because, in the words of CATCA president Jim Livingston,

> The mixture of private, corporate and airline traffic under Visual and Instrument Flight Rules is intense around Montreal, where the impact of a

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[77]J.M. Livingston, "Two Languages in Air Traffic Control: A Position of Protest," *Canadian Air Traffic Control Association Journal*, Spring 1976: 22.
[78]see Borins 34-36.

second language will be felt most severely.[79]

Francophone pilots and controllers had confident replies to each of these arguments. To the contention that bilingual control meant added stress for controllers, they countered that shifting from one language to another would pose no detriment either to safety or to efficiency. To the notion that Montreal Centre's traffic load was too heavy, the francophones replied that the heavier the traffic load, the greater the necessity for immediate and unambiguous pilot-controller communication. "In the heat of the action," wrote AGAQ president Roger Demers, "the bilingual controller had no choice. He had to speak French."[80]

The conflicting ideas regarding pilot-controller responsibilities, the alleged added stress to bilingual controllers, and the complications of air traffic mix together account for the discrepancies in each group's definition of safe air traffic control. What must be noted, however, is that there was genuine concern for air safety on the part of all airmen. The national editor of the *Vancouver Sun* was quite right when he wrote, at the height of the crisis, that "all the arguments preceding and during the week-long shutdown of commercial aviation boil down to [the word 'safety']."[81] Anglophone and francophone airmen alike believed vehemently in the rightness of their positions, and because neither group possessed the hard evidence in the

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[79]quoted in Larry Emrick, "'Safety' is the word both sides use in air dispute," *Vancouver Sun*, 28 June 1976: 12.
[80]Demers, "Bilingualism"
[81]Emrick, "'Safety'"

form of statistics that would support one definition of safety over the other, each had a credible if not airtight argument for the greater safety afforded by its proposed system. Finally, all pilots and controllers, whether French- or English-speaking, were probably much like one controller described them:

> [They] . . . are professionals who are meticulously trained to think of safety at all times . . . [A]ny pilot or controller with a few years of experience is practically brainwashed to think safety not only when at work, but in nearly everything else that he or she does.[82]

Thus, while the ideas of bilingual skies and safe skies would become opposed in the minds of many English-speaking Canadians, they were at least partially reconcilable to most anglophone airmen. Yet by the summer of 1976 anglophone public opinion outside Quebec was at least partly based on the assumption that bilingual air traffic control was totally incompatible with air safety and, therefore, that francophone airmen were placing language rights ahead of safety. Moreover, by then the issue had also divided the principals themselves -- CATCA, CALPA, and AGAQ -- into linguistic camps. Their disagreement about the definition of "air safety" was not the only factor leading to these developments. One must also examine the actions and statements of the Ministry of Transport and assess their impact in the context of the political climate described in the last chapter.

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[82]E.V. Barnes, letter to the *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 June 1976: 9.

MOT's job was to implement the Official Languages Act in Quebec's control towers without jeopardizing the air safety standards for which it was ultimately responsible. In order to do so and thus effectively balance its roles of policy implementer and safety regulator, MOT would have to have adopted the position that a bilingual air traffic system would be at least as safe or safer than an English-only one, the position held by French-speaking airmen, and then prove that to the anglophone members of CALPA and CATCA. In the first instance, Jean Marchand and Otto Lang, successive ministers of Transport, did in fact seem to assume throughout the dispute that the francophone position with respect to safety was the more credible one. However, neither took the measures necessary to enable his department to prove conclusively that a bilingual system would not jeopardize safety. Of course, Lang eventually did appoint a three-man commission of inquiry to study the matter, but only after the political damage had all been done -- to his department, to the federal government's language policy, and to relations between Canadians and Québécois.

A better point for MOT to have begun a thorough examination of the implications for safety of bilingual air traffic control might have been when the question of using the French language to guide aircraft in Quebec was first brought to the department's attention, which was in 1962. At that time the director of civil aviation, R.W. Goodwin,

ruled that French might be used but only under conditions of emergency or stress. There were few unilingual francophone pilots in the early sixties and even fewer bilingual controllers; consequently, the ruling received little argument or publicity. By 1964, however, that situation was already changing. An aviation school had opened in Baie Comeau where instruction and examinations were given entirely in French, and MOT's Maurice Baribeau, a regional adminstrator for Quebec, had instituted the precedent of hiring only bilingual controllers and radio operators for Quebec's control towers. The outcome of this policy was that by the mid seventies only about 60 of the 275 air traffic controllers in Quebec spoke only English.[83]

During this period French thus became more and more widely used as a language of air/ground communications, despite the 1962 ruling. Indeed, by the late sixties the gap between regulation and reality had become so noticeably wide that the federal government commissioned one R.R. Lisson of the Department of Supply and Services to look into it. His appointment coincided with the enactment of the Official Languages Act on July 1, 1969, and Lisson clearly had the Act in mind when he handed down his report suggesting that Quebec's airports be made "bilingual districts" and that their unilingual anglophone controllers be given the opportunity either to learn French or be transferred to controller positions elsewhere in Canada. He came to this

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[83]see Borins 20-30.

conclusion after visiting Europe's bilingual control centres and concluding, as Otto Lang would after a similar excursion a few years later, that bilingual air traffic control was safe enough. As with Lang, Lisson's conclusions were not supported by a corpus of data, a fact which was pointed out by a CATCA-sponsored air traffic control implementation team in 1972. As well, Lisson's conclusions were based on the assumption that the controller's decisions held primacy over those of the pilot, an assumption that simply was not held or accepted by CALPA's anglophone members.

Because nowhere in the world had anyone ever attempted to change a unilingual air traffic system to a bilingual one, and because MOT seemed about to do so without first thoroughly assessing the implications for safety, CATCA demanded that a detailed study be undertaken before any changes to the status quo were undertaken. Walter McLeish, the director general of civil aeronautics, responded in 1973 with the formation of the Bilingual Communications (BILCOM) Task Force, four of whose seven members were francophone. Its objectives were "to determine the nature and extent of the demand for the use of both official languages" in air traffic control and "to make recommendations on the means of meeting such demands and to assess the implications in aviation safety and resources."[84] Meanwhile, however, francophone controllers had formed l'Association québécoise

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[84]Canada, Ministry of Transport, *Project BILCOM: An Assessment of the Demand for the Use of Both Official Languages in Canadian Domestic Air/Ground Communications*, (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1975).

des contrôleurs de la navigation aérienne in order to lobby for the right to communicate in French with French-speaking pilots, which they were in fact already doing. Taking advantage of the absence of any specific directives prohibiting the use of the French language, they stepped up efforts to make bilingual air traffic control in Quebec a fait accompli.[85] The BILCOM project, which was supposed to determine the feasibility of such use, was not due to be completed until December of 1974, but apparently AQCNA was not waiting to hear what it had to say.

By increasing the use of their mother tongue on the job, the group's members forced MOT into the position of having either to confront its francophone employees or to devise an interim solution. Whether the minister, Jean Marchand, felt the atmosphere in Quebec to be not conducive to successful confrontation on MOT's part or whether he simply assumed that bilingual control was as safe as unilingual control is not known. In any event, after reviewing the situation at the Quebec City airport, where French was already heavily used, MOT issued a temporary order, NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) 12/74, permitting French at Quebec City, Sept-Îles, Saint-Jean, Baie Comeau, and Saint-Honoré. The order was issued in June of 1974 without MOT's having first consulted the pilots and without the BILCOM task force's having completed its report.[86] Issued under these circumstances, NOTAM 12/74 may have provided

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[85]Borins 39.
[86]Saywell 56.

anglophone airmen with the first concrete indication that MOT was putting political considerations ahead of safety in the air, that it was chiefly a policy implementer and only secondarily a safety regulator. It was bad enough, many of them felt, that MOT had failed to enforce the 1962 regulation limiting the use of French to emergency situations and that it was willing to change the rules "to confirm an existing situation."[87] But the BILCOM project had ostensibly been organized at the behest of CATCA to study, among other factors, the implications of bilingual air traffic control on air safety, and here was MOT confirming an existing situation "without bothering to wait for the results of its own department's findings."[88]

The BILCOM task force itself only seemed to confirm the anglophone aviators' suspicions. As far as CALPA was concerned, the very language used to describe the BILCOM project's objectives betrayed its political bias. CALPA's assessment of its first objective was that:

> The political rather than technical nature of Project BILCOM is immediately revealed by the use of the term "both official languages.[89]

The second objective was no more palatable; its wording to English-speaking members of CALPA "not only presupposes that there is a demand but presumes that the unproven demand will be met."[90] In other words, MOT seemed to have made up its

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[87] "Here Lies Aviation Safety, Killed by Compromise (Project BILCOM)," editorial, *Pilot*, Spring 1975: 4.
[88] "Here Lies" 1.
[89] "Here Lies" 3. See also "The Lack of Credibility in MoT," editorial, *Pilot*, Spring 1976: 2.
[90] "Here Lies" 3.

mind before the study had even begun.

The task force studied the question from two angles. It examined actual bilingual control procedures in both Quebec and Europe, and it sent questionnaires to 7,551 Canadian pilots. In its study of existing procedures in two languages, the task force had two points of view upon which to base its analysis. The first was the pilots' contention that it was they who had the final responsibility for a flight's safe journey and that therefore it was they who had to have "the total picture" of the aircraft's environment. This, of course, was the argument for the necessity of the listening watch. The second perspective and the one actually taken by the BILCOM task force was the francophone airmen's insistence that the locus of control should be entirely ground-based and that therefore it was critical that controller and pilot understand one another. This assumption, needless to say, was categorically rejected by anglophone pilots. The BILCOM task force, said the irate editor of the CALPA trade journal *Pilot*, claimed that

> "only the control element of ATS has a complete picture" of what is going on, and disregards the fact that a pilot's responsibility under the Aeronautics Act demands that he know everything about his aircraft's immediate environment.[91]

Thus, by approaching the safety question from only one perspective without offering any definitive proof that this approach was as conducive to air safety as the alternative, the task force, and hence MOT, left itself open to

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[91] "Here Lies" 4.

accusations of making decisions based entirely upon political considerations.[92] Moreover, in CALPA's estimation the task force's reading of the questionnaire was just as biased. While the survey indicated that 69 percent of francophone respondents wanted two-language control, CALPA's anglophone members were quick to point out that those figures represented "just 430 pilots . . . 5.7 percent of pilots in Quebec and just 1 percent of pilots in Canada."[93]

The BILCOM report was tabled on May 22, 1975. Essentially it upheld the provisions of the NOTAM and further recommended the expansion of bilingual VFR air traffic services to other small airports in Quebec as well as to the Montreal terminal radar service area,[94] the national capital region, and "all aeradio stations in northern Quebec."[95] It did not, however, provide for similar expansion for IFR flying, and it upheld English-only VFR for the busy mixed environments of Dorval and Mirabel. In spite of these limitations in its recommendations, the report's failure to prove conclusively that a bilingual air traffic system would be a safe air traffic system as well as the task force's having virtually ignored CALPA's own position on safety indicated to anglophone pilots that MOT was putting its political agenda ahead of its regulatory role.

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[92]see comments by Saywell 79-80.
[93]"Here Lies" 4.
[94]see Borins 10-11. The TRSA is a positive control zone occupying the altitudes between 2,000 and 9,500 feet of a 20-mile radius surrounding major airports. Its purpose is to provide a locus for separating commercial jets from smaller aircraft flying VFR.
[95]Borins 48.

Or, as the editor of *Pilot* put it:

> There seems to be an overwhelming concern for the language rights of 430 individuals and very little for the safety of everyone else."[96]

From this point MOT was in CALPA's eyes no longer a regulatory body but strictly a policy implementer. For this reason, the tabling of the BILCOM report can be considered a watershed in the development of the dispute.[97] Not only did the report seem to confirm that MOT had given the federal government's plan to implement the Official Languages Act in air traffic control priority over ensuring that aviation safety standards were maintained, but that having done so, it had left its regulatory pose vacant. And CALPA was quick to step in. As far as anglophone pilots were concerned, MOT's apparent abdication of its regulatory function left them no choice but to assume that function themselves:

> CALPA has been forced into the position of providing leadership in a situation affecting . . . the whole of the aviation industry in Canada . . . This unenviable prominence was not sought, but in the absence of any government action and the abdication of its usual attitude of responsibility by the regulatory body, somebody had to stand up and speak for their beliefs.[98]

According to Ken Maley, government action would have to include full research into the impact of bilingual air traffic control on air safety. Because Canada's air traffic system was already considered to be one of the safest in the world, he explained, the burden of proving that a change in

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[96]"Here Lies" 4.
[97]see Lépine 96.
[98]Ken Maley, "Message from the President," *Pilot*, Fall 1975: 5.

the status quo would be an improvement was on the party wishing to make the change. Thus, if MOT was to fulfill its regulatory role to the satisfaction of anglophone pilots, it had to ascertain that any change in the air traffic system would "at least maintain the present high level of safety, if not enhance it."[99]

The BILCOM report was a turning point in MOT's relations with the francophone organization as well. If the project's recommended expansion of bilingual services was too much for anglophone airmen, it was too little for the members of AQCNA, who wanted to see French become a lingua franca of both VFR and IFR services in Quebec. Unhappy with the official version, Louis Doucet, a francophone member of both the BILCOM task force and AQCNA, tabled a minority report which recommended the extension of bilingual control to Quebec's IFR services as well. In this report he claimed that francophone pilots and controllers would understand one another better when communicating in their own language; that is, he argued that bilingual, ground-based, positive control would be safer. Like some of CALPA's members he, too, referred to the Aeronautics Act to support his point of view:

> The principal law which defines our responsibilities is the Aeronautics Act. Its objective is the sure and efficacious utilization of aircraft in the interests of all. This objective is our first responsibility and principle, and its realization depends in a large measure on the good functioning of communications between pilots and controllers.[100]

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[99]Maley 4.

[100]Louis Doucet, *Minority Report, Project BILCOM*, quoted in

But he also raised the issue of francophone aviators' constitutional right to work in French:

> At present, at least [80 %] of the controllers/radio operators are bilingual. This makes possible the parallel: French, the language of culture and leisure; English, the language of work.[101]

The combined themes of the minority report, that French in the air was not only safe but a constitutional right as well, comprised the francophone argument favouring the implementation of French in air traffic control. But the contents of the minority report and the subsequent position taken by AQCNA and its successor, AGAQ, leave little doubt as to which element of the argument had priority in the minds of francophone airmen, whether controllers or pilots. Because they took for granted that bilingual air traffic control would be safer, the idea that French in the air posed a threat to safety was dismissed out of hand. Francophone controllers and certainly unilingual francophone pilots were more than convinced that bilingual air traffic control would enhance safety at Quebec's airports; consequently, they tended to treat the safety question as though the validity of their assessment of it were a given. But the importance of being able to speak French on the job in Quebec was not dismissed. A significant reason for permitting the use of French air/ground communications was to enable francophone airmen to realize their right to speak

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[100](cont'd) Jacques Guay, "Urgence: l'utilisation du français dans les communications aériennes." Montreal, *Le Jour*, 24 April 1975: 1.

[101]Doucet, quoted in Schneider 26.

their mother tongue at work. French in the air was thus a small but integral part of the thrust towards francization in business and industry in the province, which by this time had developed an irresistable momentum and occupied the minds of all Québécois no matter where they worked.

Thus, beginning with the limits in the recommendations offered by the BILCOM task force for the use of French at Quebec's airports, MOT found itself pitted against francophone airmen demanding what they believed to be a constitutional right. Furthermore, MOT represented the federal government, while its attempts to apply the Official Languages Act to Quebec's air traffic system was an indication that Ottawa assumed itself to be the guarantor of Québécois' language rights. As we have seen, Québécois themselves were looking more and more to their own government to fulfill this role. When, in the case of the BILCOM task force's report and the events that followed, MOT and by extension Ottawa appeared to be limiting a francophone group's right to speak French at work, both the government and the department came under fire not only from the relatively small numbers of francophone controllers and pilots but also from all of Quebec's French-speakers.

From the tabling of the BILCOM report to the eight-day walkout of June 1976 MOT struggled between the contradictory demands of anglophone and francophone aviators, a struggle which took place in private meetings, in the press and in the House of Commons. In all likelihood, MOT's position was

an impossible one. As a federal government department, it was committed to ensuring safety in the air, a concept whose ambiguity was exceeded only by CALPA's and AQCNA's certainty that it contained no ambiguities. MOT was also committed to implementing the federal policy of bilingualism in the sectors of the federal civil service under its jurisdiction.[102] That it had difficulty reconciling these roles continued to be apparent up to the summer of 1976. For example, when MOT and the various airmen's organizations met on June 26, 1975, to discuss the BILCOM report, Walter McLeish could not separate language rights from safety. On the one hand, he explained to those present, "the use of one language is the safest approach," but he added, "can you deny a unilingual francophone the right to exercise a career in aviation in Quebec?" In a memorandum outlining the meeting, John Keenan, a lawyer for CALPA, believed he recognized MOT's imperative behind McLeish's words: "One could read between the lines that Mr. McLeish was under considerable political pressure on this issue."[103]

Comments from other MOT representatives did little to sway that impression. Indeed, there is some indication that the department was ignoring the safety arguments of CALPA's anglophone members as though the pilots themselves were only politicking. The most telling example of the this attitude was recorded in the House of Commons:

Gordon Towers [Conservative MP for Red Deer]: In

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[102]see Lépine 63.
[103]quoted in Borins 56.

> view of a statement made by the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association . . . to the effect that the very concept of bilingual air traffic services should be rejected because of the inherent degradation of safety standards . . . will the minister assure Parliament that the government will not take unilateral action which would jeopardize complete and rapid comprehension of communications by all pilots so as to ensure passenger safety?
> Jean Marchand: No, Mr. Speaker.[104]

Ken Maley's frustrations over Marchand's intransigence have also been recorded: "'Nothing we say seems to get through to him. I hope he disappears over the horizon somewhere.'"[105] Marchand did eventually "disappear," first from the ministry and later from the cabinet, but his position with respect to MOT's conflicting agendas was certainly not unique. In the *Montreal Star*, for example, Ross Wickware of the BILCOM task force stated that Ottawa believed bilingualism to be

> "a sign of the times . . . Refusing it could mean endangering all of Canadian society" if there were discrimination against Québécois in aviation simply because they do not speak English well, or not at all.[106]

This attitude met with concerted resistance from CALPA in early August of 1975, when its anglophone members made their first strike threat in a resolution to Jean Marchand in which CALPA scheduled a one-day strike for October 17, 1975,

> unless the government has by that date withdrawn NOTAM 12/74 authorizing the use of French at five Quebec airports and insists on immediate compliance with regulations on the use of English which are

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[104]House of Commons *Debates*, Vol. VIII, 29 July 1975: 8025.
[105]quoted in "'Near-misses' raked as pilots escalate war of the words," *Montreal Gazette*, 19 August 1975: 3.
[106]John Wildgust, "Air safety a factor in controversy over use of French," *Montreal Star*, 16 August 1975: B4.

presently being flagrantly violated.[107]

At this point, CALPA's and CATCA's anglophone members still included francophones, but the strike threat, containing the assertion that the English-only system was the safest system, made French-speaking airmen feel virtually unwelcome in their own organizations. Although they did not withdraw from either CALPA or its less strident counterpart, CATCA, French-speaking pilots and controllers, including the members of AQCNA, formed their blanket organization, l'Association des gens de l'air du Québec, whose members would become known to all Québécois as les gens de l'air. The group's executive included Roger Demers (president), Pierre Beaudry (vice-president), and Jean-Luc Patenaude (publicity director). The strike threat and the formation of AGAQ further polarized anglophone and francophone airmen, decreasing the chance for eventual compromise between the two groups.

Otto Lang succeeded Jean Marchand as Minister of Transport on September 15, 1975, and for a few months he seemed to be sympathetic to CALPA's insistence that technical aspects be considered ahead of the political aspects of the dispute. He went so far as to issue another NOTAM (12/75) stipulating that all IFR flights be conducted in an English-only environment. Walter McLeish attempted to justify the NOTAM to francophone airmen by stating that

A mix of two languages introduces factors of

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[107]quoted in Patrick Finn, "Tension building between pilots and Ottawa," *Montreal Star*, 9 August 1975: A2.

> misunderstanding, communications delays and retarded compliance in flight control procedures, and consequent deterioration of safety.[108]

NOTAM 12/75 represents MOT's only substantial recognition of CALPA's position with regard to safety prior to the strike of June 1976. The department promised to follow up the memorandum with yet another study of two-language control, this time using its simulation centre. The NOTAM and the promises satisfied CALPA for the moment; its newsletter of December 12 interpreted the moves to be indicative of "a truly objective re-evaluation of the entire program."[109]

Up to this point, CATCA as a whole had played a minor public role. Its members had not joined with CALPA in the strike threat, its president, Jim Livingston, only reiterating the organization's main requirement with respect to bilingual air traffic control, that unilingual francophone pilots be restricted to areas where bilingual control was available.[110] With the issuing of NOTAM 12/75, however, de facto bilingualism in control towers had become illegal and controllers who had previously stayed out of the conflict were forced to choose between compliance with the regulations and acknowledging francophones' desire to use their mother tongue on the job. Predictably, anglophones tended to support anglophones while most francophones sided with their fellow French-speakers. Tension was exacerbated

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[108]William Huck, memorandum to the deputy minister, 12 November 1975, quoted in Borins 70.
[109]CALPA, "Headquarters Bulletin," 12 December 1975, quoted in Borins 74.
[110]Saywell 58.

by the fact that francophone controllers had been stepping up their use of French with MOT's tacit compliance, and the latest NOTAM, of course, was designed to put an end to their efforts to do so. The result was on-the-job verbal battles between francophones and anglophones at Montreal Centre as well as several suspensions. Beyond the confines of Quebec's control towers, reactions to the latest move by MOT were, if possible, more heated. Roger Demers demanded Pierre Trudeau's personal intervention against the "racism" of MOT bureaucrats,[111] the Quebec Liberal caucus pressured Lang to clarify the government's policy with respect to bilingual control. In the Quebec National Assembly, Robert Bourassa announced that the NOTAM forbidding French was "unacceptable."[112] In the House of Commons, Lang was drilled by his colleagues from Quebec about francophone controllers' linguistic rights.

Apparently Lang found the combined forces of his Québécois critics impossible to resist. On December 13, 1975, he turned his back on his own directive by announcing at Dorval "the progressive introduction of French" into Quebec's air traffic system under both VFR and IFR conditions. Such a step, he said, would provide

> concrete evidence that the government fully appreciates and is striving to meet the aspirations of the French-speaking members of the aviation community to use their own language.[113]

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[111]Borins 70.
[112]Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, 9 December 1975: 2451.
[113]"Transport Minister Otto Lang Announces Bilingual Air Communications will be Introduced Progressively in Quebec,"

Commenting on Lang's announcement, an editorial in the *Globe and Mail* remarked that Lang had "written off" MOT's responsibility to regulate the air industry in deference to its political responsibility to ensure the implementation of a federal policy.[114] McLeish as much as admitted this in a telephone conversation with Maley the following day.[115]

The uproar among controllers resulting from NOTAM 12/75 could only be exacerbated by Lang's December 13 announcement. Both coincided too handily with the expiration of the collective agreement between MOT and CATCA. Evidently sensing an opportunity to give his union some clout in the language dispute and recognizing that the job security of Quebec's unilingual anglophone controllers was at risk, Jim Livingston added two language-related demands to the negotiations for a new contract. One was to limit bilingual services to VFR operations in Quebec, excluding the mixed VFR/IFR environments of Montreal and Saint-Hubert; the second was to restrict unilingual francophone pilots to airspace serviced by bilingual controllers.[116] With these two demands, CATCA had shifted from a relatively moderate position to one as rigid as CALPA's.

Very little that Otto Lang's department said or did after the December announcement at Dorval helped to convince MOT's detractors that the department was concerned about

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[113](cont'd) Transport Canada news release number 153-75, 13 December 1975: 1-5.
[114]"For the worst of reasons," editorial, Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 15 December 1975: 6.
[115]Borins 75.
[116]Borins 90.

safety in the air. Conversely, MOT betrayed its emphasis on implementing the federal language policy on several occasions over the months preceding the wildcat strike. In the House of Commons, for example, Lang told Conservative MP Jack Murta that:

> In this country there are two languages, and when we can we will develop proper procedures for the use of both languages in this area. We will do that with safety, but it is not the only element involved.[117]

His syntax in this statement may have implied that safety to him was no more important than was bilingualism, and he made no attempt at the time to reassure his doubters.

Nor did the federal government itself make any kind of effort to apprise the nation of the linguistic realities of Quebec or the purpose of the Official Languages Act. Instead, it ignored early indications that its policies required a proper explanation to be palatable to the public. In the House British Columbia MP Benno Friesen stated that

> the impression among many people who are not unilingual francophone or not bilingual is that they will be obliged to become bilingual whether they wish to or not.[118]

Later, David Lewis remarked that English-speaking Canadians tended to think of bilingualism as a program being forced on them and not, as Lewis himself indicated, as one simply permitting "francophones to speak their own language in their own country."[119] Thus, the difficulties MOT incurred

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[117]House of Commons *Debates*, Vol. X, 15 December 1975: 9997.
[118]House of Commons, *Debates*, Vol. X, 9 February 1976: 10781. See also Don Sellar, "Bad explanation of bilingualism policy fostered ignorance," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 June 1976: 8.
[119]David Lewis, quoted in Ralph Heintzman, "Languages in

by placing policy before safety were compounded by Ottawa's not having adequately explained the policy to English-speaking Canadians.

While the federal government and MOT might have been somewhat negligent in explaining their points of view to the nation, English-speaking members of CALPA and CATCA seemed acutely aware of the importance of getting public opinion on their side and keeping it there. Consequently, as CATCA negotiated with MOT amid hints of strike action should the department continue on its present course, CALPA and CATCA organized a symposium on air safety, which was held in Ottawa on the weekend of March 2 and 3. The International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations (IFALPA) was the official sponsor of the symposium; its participation gave the proceedings and thus the anglophones' position an air of political neutrality and thus greater legitimacy. Of course, the symposium had been designed to do just that, CATCA and CALPA having conceived and orchestrated it as a "media event" whose aim was "to achieve wide press coverage for a concerted view that the use of more than one language in air traffic control was a degradation of safety."[120]

If AGAQ and MOT had difficulty separating the issue of Québécois' language rights from the issue of safety, CALPA and CATCA were obviously talented at invoking detached, logical-sounding and single-minded pleas for public

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[119](cont'd) Conflict," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, August 1976: 2.

[120]CATCA, minutes of national executive meeting, 19 January 1976: 1, quoted in Borins 85.

consideration of air safety and only air safety. This approach was most evident at the symposium. Here, with the support of IFALPA, CALPA and CATCA made their claim that English-only air traffic control was a worldwide trend because it was the safest way to go, although some countries did allow more than one language under IFR. They also argued that strictly positive control would never override the pilot's responsibility to keep a listening watch on all aircraft in his immediate vicinity. To support the first point of view, anglophone pilots called attention to two recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):

> 5.2.1.1.1. Recommendation. In general, the air-ground radiotelephony communications should be conducted in the language normally used by the station on the ground. Note -- the language normally used by the station on the ground may not necessarily be the language of the State in which it is located.
> 5.2.1.1.2. Recommendation. Pending the development and adoption of a more suitable form of speech for universal use in aeronautical radiotelephony communications, the English language should be used as such and should be available on request from any aircraft station unable to comply with 5.2.1.1.1., at all stations on the ground serving designated airports and routes used by international carriers.[121]

Neither of these recommendations stated unequivocally that English had to be used. In fact, the same recommendations were cited by CALPA's adversaries as proof that bilingual control was quite permissible in international control. But CALPA also claimed that ICAO's recommendations could not be

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[121]International Civil Aviation Organization, quoted in Saywell 55-56.

interpreted as representing a static situation. If the status quo permitted the use of other languages, the goal of the future did not. That goal, outlined at the 1974 IFALPA conference in Caracas, Venezuela, was to make English the exclusive language of international aviation.[122] Furthermore, as one spokesperson claimed, "if other languages are used it is because of the difficulty of implementation and historic patterns, not because it is a move away from English."[123] ICAO, after all, was composed of 130 nations, so while it "clearly recognized" the importance of "a single, standardized language," the fact that its goal had yet to be achieved

> reflects the difficulties of implementation within the membership of ICAO and illustrates that the "difference" between ICAO and IFALPA is merely one of degree -- IFALPA policy is an upgrading to a standard of the goal recognized by ICAO.[124]

With their case for the trend towards the standardized use of English, CALPA's English-speaking members demonstrated their ability to restrict their arguments against bilingual control to their most logical and sensible elements. Such appeals to logic, comon sense, and historical trends were made to the public on other occasions as well. Contrasting with the francophones' position, for example, were anglophone airmen's unsentimental reflections on their own mother tongue. "The language of aviation *happens* to be English," said one. "If it were Spanish, we would all have

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[122]See Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious" 12.
[123]Capt. Jim O'Grady, quoted in Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious" 12.
[124]Desmarais, "Safe, Expeditious" 12.

to learn Spanish."[125] Another, a pilot, insisted that the jargon comprising aviation English was "really not proper English at all" and pointed out that two major distress calls, "pan" and "mayday," were derived from the French words "la panne" (breakdown) and "m'aidez" (help me).[126] The use of English, in sum, was an accident of history, maintained in the present through expedience and "the need to safeguard human life."[127] With these arguments CALPA and CATCA could convince the English-speaking public that the ubiquitous refrain, "English is the international language of aviation," was based entirely upon logical and neutral considerations.

In spite of the weight carried by their more reasonable attempts to justify their positions, English-speaking members of CATCA and CALPA were not above more dubious tactics in their campaign to influence public sentiment. These were evident in the scary but largely unsubstantiated tales of near-misses caused by francophone pilots not understanding English instructions, anglophone pilots not understanding French instructions, and general anarchy in the control tower. On the surface, they seemed as credible as anything anglophone airmen had to say about safety and the French language and, moreover, to provide the concrete evidence necessary to convince nervous potential airline

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[125]Desmarais, "Pilots Room" 23.
[126]John Eliot, "Bilingual air traffic control: a pilot's view," *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 5 June 1976: 7.
[127]Arnold Field, *International Air Traffic Control: Management of the World's Airspace*, (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1985): 39.

customers that bilingualism and air traffic control could be a lethal combination. A closer examination of the stories, however, suggests that their factual weight was often complemented by a mixture of hyperbole and calculating strategy that smacked of attempts not only to convince but also to frighten.[128]

But at the very least the English-speaking airmen's lack of reference to any considerations other than safety reinforced their image of sincerity and professionalism, and this image, juxtaposed with les gens de l'air's and MOT's repeated references to language rights, proved to be a useful political weapon. After all, as highly trained professionals both pilots and controllers had specialized knowledge not enjoyed by the general public or, as they never failed to emphasize, by MOT bureaucrats. This knowledge made them the experts, and their often repeated pleas for safety frequently included the reminder that they knew "a lot more about the hazards of the system than most of the people who are doing all the talking."[129] What anglophone pilots and controllers did not add to statements like this one was that notwithstanding their emphasis on language rights, French-speaking pilots and controllers had

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[128]see, for example, Victor Malanek, "Near miss by jets linked to controller dispute," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 21 June 1976: 2; Arnold Bruner, "Those near-misses: pilots blame the two-language control system," *Globe and Mail*, 22 June 1976: 1; Earle McCurdy, "Mid-air plane crash 'inevitable' if French used at major airports," St. John's, *Evening Telegram*, 27 May 1976: 3; "Aircraft incidents on the rise," *Edmonton Journal*, 22 June 1976: 20.

[129]Barnes, letter.

the same training and knowledge and thus were similarly qualified to call themselves safety experts. Indeed, most English-speaking members of both unions steadfastly refused to acknowledge that a francophone side to the safety issue even existed.

Each side's handling of its attempts to gain public support would very soon be critical, as negotiations between CATCA and MOT began to fail. CATCA's grievances with MOT had been placed before a conciliation board, which recommended a public inquiry into the safety issue. Since it was a public inquiry which eventually solved the dispute, one might speculate that had Lang and the other key members of his department been more careful in organizing an inquiry at that time, the situation might have been defused. Unfortunately, MOT was incautious. Confident in the department's stand on the issue, Walter McLeish recommended the appointment of John Keenan, a bilingual Montrealer, to head the commission, although Keenan had been a lawyer for CALPA and was known to be opposed to bilingual air traffic control. As well, responding to pressure from CATCA's anglophone members, Lang included in the inquiry's terms of reference his commitment "to make sure that all aspects of safety" would be placed before it and to delay any further implementation of bilingualism until the inquiry had reported.[130] Meanwhile, McLeish told some members of AGAQ that the inquiry was but a "marketing operation" to sell

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[130]House of Commons, *Debates*, Vol. XIII, 18 May 1976: 13612.

bilingual air traffic control to the public.[131] Marketing operation or no, the appointment of Keenan enraged AGAQ, which forced his removal in less than a month and thus nullified MOT's agreement with CATCA, which had included Keenan's appointment.

These developments engendered a response from CALPA in which the pilots reiterated their intention to "regulate" safety because MOT had declined to do so:

> If the Federal regulatory body cannot maintain the integrity demanded of it in the area of public safety then, we, as professional pilots, will have no alternative but to refuse to operate until the entire situation is removed from the political arena.[132]

This statement was, of course, a promise to support any strike action by CATCA, and it was duly kept. Unable to reach a further settlement following Keenan's resignation, CATCA members voted to walk off their jobs and did so. Eight airports were closed on June 20 and 21. Treasury Board president Jean Chrétien issued an injunction forcing the controllers to return to work, but CALPA rose to the occasion, Ken Maley stating that the injunction "in no way requires pilots to abrogate their responsibilities by flying contrary to their own individual and professional opinion."[133] And indeed they did not, but aggravating the situation for MOT was the fact that they were supported in their actions by 10 American airlines and by some international ones. Maley later gave some advice to MOT in a

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[131]quoted in Borins 114.
[132]quoted in Saywell 62.
[133]Saywell 63.

press release. The problem could be solved, he stated, "if the government acted on a paraphrase of an earlier statement by the Prime Minister: The politicians have no place in the cockpits of the nation's airlines."[134]

It is estimated that the strike cost Air Canada alone over $3 million a day. But the cost for Canada as a nation was much greater. It seemed evident from the moment controllers left their posts that beyond Quebec's borders support for the strikers was overwhelming. English-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, no matter how minimally they understood the finer technical points of aviation safety, seemed to be wholeheartedly endorsing the actions of the strikers, while Québécois offered equally undivided allegiance to the members of AGAQ. The reasons for this division are clear. The political climate in Quebec precluded any hesitation on Ottawa's part in implementing its language policy in Quebec, Québécois believing that it was really up to the Quebec government to protect their language rights and not "the government of English Canada." Given this belief, any stalling on Ottawa's part could only engender bitter resentment of Ottawa's intervention in Quebec's affairs. For their part, anglophones in Quebec realized that the "Frenchness" of Quebec was inevitable and even desirable, but they had hoped the federal government would be its guarantor, and MOT seemed about to destroy that possibility. And Quebec's English-speakers feared the

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[134]quoted in Saywell 70.

consequences of that for their own rights. MOT could not wholly accommodate the supporters of French in the air, however, given its dual roles as policy implementer and safety regulator. Yet for the same reason it could not accommodate the requirements of the anglophone pilots and controllers; whenever it acted as a policy implementer, MOT's role as regulatory body was compromised. The result was that anglophone and francophone airmen became completely polarized. More importantly, however, each side also became powerful symbols in the eyes of the public. CATCA and CALPA were perceived by English-speakers outside Quebec to be the guarantors of safety and the brave opponents of bilingualism, and by Québécois the embodiment of English oppressors. Les gens de l'air, on the other hand, symbolized to a vocal segment of anglophone Canadians the tyranny of a French minority imposing its will on the whole nation, while to their fellow French-speakers the francophone airmen were at the forefront of a struggle for linguistic justice that Québécois were determined to win. The public response to the dispute, discussed in the next two chapters, was an indication that notwithstanding Trudeau's gesture of compromise represented by the Official Languages Act, Canada's two founding peoples were in 1976 still living in their respective solitudes.

III. "No Claim to Greatness At All"

The strike by anglophone airmen was in the eyes of many English-speaking Canadians symbolic of opposition to bilingualism and of commonsense concern for air safety overriding the "emotional" issue of language rights for Québécois. Thus, the walkout grabbed public attention and engendered the barrage of letters to editors, phone calls to radio stations and on-the-street opinion which was collectively labeled the "backlash against bilingualism." The backlash revealed among English-speaking Canadians not only a deep resentment of the bilingualism policy and of Quebec as well, but also a complete lack of understanding of what Québécois themselves perceived to be the important elements of the issue. Public opinion also rallied the English-language press, whose writers and editors reassessed their thoughts about the critical aspects of the dispute and, in their soul-searching about Canada's future, revealed ideas about Canadian identity. Ironically, however, these too evinced an incomprehension of Québécois' point of view. Finally, the backlash had a profound impact on the outcome of the conflict. It hastened MOT once more to a change of policy, this time to one that gave the lie to the federal government's mandate to be the guarantor of Québécois' language rights.

In English-speaking Canada outside Quebec, public opinion removed the air traffic controllers' dispute from the confines of a small group within a specialized industry

and made it, as one writer remarked, "a slightly modified version of an old issue in Canada."[135] The old issue was, of course, that of language policy and how it could divide or reconcile Canada's two language groups. This was an issue, the same writer noted, that had been raised at the time of the Quebec Act, Lord Durham's report, the Manitoba and Ontario schools crises, and the B & B Commission. Few members of the public interested enough in the issue to write about it or telephone a radio station or speak their minds to a reporter on a city sidewalk were concerned about safety and safety alone. Instead, bilingualism and its major beneficiaries, Québécois and other French-speaking Canadians, were the usual subjects of their discussions.

The bulk of public interest in the issue was expressed between late May and the end of July 1976, the period leading up to and immediately following the eight-day walkout. On a regional basis, except within Quebec, which will be discussed in the next chapter, there were few variations in the tone of public opinion, and those tended to be in degree rather than kind. What the tone seemed to suggest was that bilingualism was deeply resented by English-speaking Canadians, their resentment often based on notions of Canadian Confederation that did not concur with those of Pierre Trudeau. In some instances this tone was evident even when the nominal concern was air safety. In

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[135]James Ferrabee, "Canada's perennial problem now up in the air," Southam News Service, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 8 June 1976: 8.

letters on this subject were statements by zealots about "mass murder"[136] in the skies or about the possibility that "safety and common sense . . . might take second place to foolish cultural pride."[137] Such letters appeared in the major dailies of all provinces.

Other letters, however, indicated genuine concern about air safety. Of these the majority, 59 of 72 examined, accepted the position of the anglophone controllers and pilots, often reiterating the catch-phrase that English was the international language of aviation.[138] Criticism of the anglophone airmen's stance with respect to the safety question was also expressed in English from B.C. to Newfoundland. One reader suggested that French-speaking pilots and controllers cared just as much about safety as their anglophone co-workers, while another contended that unilingual anglophone controllers in Quebec were concerned mainly about job security.[139]

Yet while the question of air safety did occupy the minds of many of those who expressed themselves on the dispute, safety was not the dominant issue in the public consciousness. An examination of 226 letters to anglophone dailies outside of Quebec indicates that in the months of June and July 1976 only 72 readers expressed concerns that

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[136]Letter to *Toronto Star*, 26 June 1976: B3.
[137]Letter to *Globe and Mail*, 23 June 1976: 4.
[138]Letters to *Toronto Star*, 19 July 1976: C5; *Vancouver Sun*, 29 July 1976: 5; "Anti-French backlash sparked by airport bilingualism issue," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 5 July 1976: 1.
[139]*Vancouver Sun*, 10 July 1976: 5.

were restricted to the effects of bilingual air traffic control on air safety. The balance of the letters revealed a rift in national unity that suggests that the "old issue" in Canadian political life had been very much revived and promised to be in its latest incarnation every bit as contentious as Lord Durham and the schools crises had once made it. Of 226 letters 61 expressed general animosity towards Québécois, 17 more claimed that francophone Quebecers were attempting to take over Canada via the federal government, 11 believed that Quebec was alienating the rest of Canada through Bill 22, 34 expressed opposition to official bilingualism specifically, and one pointed to Canada's multicultural heritage. In only 21 letters was the main theme a defence of French-speakers' language rights, while a further 12 believed that English-speaking Canadians were showing themselves to be bigots in their opposition to bilingual air traffic control.

One idea was that Canada was multicultural, not merely French and English-speaking, as official bilingualism seemed to imply. In Alberta, where 51.5 percent of the population consisted of persons whose origins were neither French nor British, one German-born farmer insisted that people like him were "the founding race" in the west, rather than French Canadians.[140] A Conservative Member of Parliament from Manitoba reiterated that view. "There are more than two founding races in this country," he said, "but the BNA Act

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[140]Claude Arpin, "Bilingualism 'a dirty word' in the west," *Vancouver Sun*, 5 October 1976: 1.

mentions only two."[141] This point of view was not restricted to westerners. An Ontarian writing to Otto Lang claimed that Canada was populated by Italians, Polish, Dutch, and Germans, who, unlike Québécois, did not "force" their languages "on we [sic], the English-speaking public."[142] Still other members of the public wondered how bilingualism could work when the Québécois themselves seemed to have rejected it. A letter to the *Winnipeg Tribune* made this comment about Bill 22:

> Bilingualism is pushed down our throats even though Quebec wants to be unilingual and couldn't care less about the rest of Canada speaking French.[143]

An *Ottawa Citizen* reader remarked that anglophones were "second-class citizens" in Quebec,[144] and a similar theme was sounded in letters published in the *Edmonton Journal*, *Calgary Herald*, *Toronto Star*, and *Vancouver Sun*.[145]

Unfortunately, public opinion was rarely so refined as to offer analyses of the issue based on interest in or comprehension of the safety aspect, or notions of Canadian ethnocultural composition, or awareness of the problems posed to bilingualism by Bill 22. Instead, these perspectives were buried in invective directed at Quebec, the Trudeau Liberals, and bilingualism itself. French was alternately being pushed, shoved, rammed, or jammed down

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[141]quoted in Arpin, "Bilingualism"
[142]quoted in William Johnson, "Air dispute brings out 'two solitudes'," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 10 July 1976: 4.
[143]Letter to *Winnipeg Tribune*, 17 July 1976: 9.
[144]Letter to *Ottawa Citizen* 21 July 1976: 6.
[145]Letters to *Edmonton Journal*, 26 June 1976: 5; *Toronto Star*, July 8, 9, 21, 28, 1976: B5; *Calgary Herald*, 19 June 1976: 8; *Vancouver Sun*, 11 July 1976: 5.

unwilling anglophone throats,[146] while Quebec's culture was termed "a decadent and crime-ridden society,"[147] "creeping" throughout the nation like a "cancer."[148] And whether it was bilingual soup cans or the "national embarrassment" of Olympics announcements in French, it was obvious to these readers that "the founding race minority has taken over almost completely . . . in this wonderful country."[149] Trudeau was likened to both John Vorster, the president of South Africa, and Hitler.[150] A number of letters mentioned that Quebec should separate from the rest of Canada.[151]

Blatantly anti-French attitudes of letter-writers were also evident in public opinion surveys conducted at the time. In one such survey, conducted by the *Globe and Mail* and published on July 5, 1976, four reporters

> found, everywhere, little understanding of what the issue was about and many misconceptions and, in English Canada, a virulent anti-French reaction.[152]

The "anti-French reaction" was not necessarily directed at Québécois themselves, although the bulk of such letters to Canadian dailies (59 of 93 examined) did have an unmistakably prejudicial tone. Others, though, attacked bilingualism rather than Québécois. The reasoning behind

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[146]Letters to *Toronto Star*, 28 July, 30 June, 14 July 1976: B5; *Calgary Herald*, 21 June, 28 June 1976: 8.
[147]Letter to *Toronto Star*, 3 July 1976: B3.
[148]Letters to *Toronto Star*, 29 June: C4, 30 June 1976: B5. *Vancouver Sun*, 20 July 1976: 5.
[149] Letters to *Toronto Star*, 28 July 1976: B5; *Calgary Herald*, 22 July 1976: 8; *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 June 1976: 6.
[150]Letters to *Toronto Star*, 8 July 1976: B5; St. John's, *Evening Telegram*, 2 July 1976: 6.
[151]Letters to *Toronto Star*, 16 July: B5, 26 July: C5, 28 July 1976: B5; *Calgary Herald*, 28 June 1976: 8.
[152]"Anti-French backlash"

these letters was diffuse; but a good many of their writers seemed to feel that bilingualism was mainly a waste of money, with language training for civil servants coming under particular attack across Canada. An *Edmonton Journal* reader called the policy wasteful, while a letter published in the *Toronto Star* suggested that French be taught in schools, not the civil service.[153] Apart from these and a few other examples of substantive criticism, however, the public's appraisal of bilingualism appears to have been no more informed than its assessment of the air traffic controllers' dispute itself, most of it amounting to epithetical pronouncements on Trudeau's policy. Bilingualism was alternately "atrocious," "absurd," "illogical," "divisive," "perverted," or "ridiculous."[154]

William Johnson of the *Globe and Mail* noted that Otto Lang himself received 700 letters during the period surrounding the strike. Johnson described their contents as "a dialogue of the deaf," with letters in English constituting "a long monologue against bilingualism," and letters in French denouncing his ministry's actions. According to Johnson,

> The letters . . . prove that there are "two solitudes" in Canada. What they don't tell us is what part of the Canadian population lives there.[155]

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[153]Letters to *Edmonton Journal*, 19 June 1976: 5; *Toronto Star*, 9 July 1976: B5; see also St. John's, *Evening Telegram*, 6 July 1976: 6.
[154]Letters to *Edmonton Journal*, 2 August 1976: 5; *Toronto Star*, 24 June, 28 July 1976: B5; *Calgary Herald*, 27 July, 17 August 1976: 8; *Vancouver Sun*, 23 July 1976: 5.
[155]Johnson, "Air dispute"

Certainly it would be difficult to determine the scope of the backlash against bilingualism, and samplings of 226 or even 700 letters would hardly satisfy a statistician. Moreover, one could weigh the evidence of opposition to bilingualism against that in its favour and be somewhat skeptical about drawing any conclusions at all from public opinion on the subject. On the one hand, an abusive commentary entitled "Quebec, Go Suck a Lemon" and first published in the Brampton, Ontario, *Daily Times*, was read on radio stations throughout the west and in the case of one station was said to have garnered more requests for transcripts than any other commentary in its history.[156] On the other hand, when the CBC radio program *Cross Country Checkup* dealt with the air traffic controllers' dispute, only a very few callers were opposed to bilingualism.[157] And while the *Toronto Star* published a pageful of letters on Trudeau, most of which criticized his "Frenchness" much more so than his leadership,[158] Progressive Conservative leader Joe Clark was applauded by a crowd in Manitoba following a speech supporting bilingualism.[159] Mail received by Otto Lang and columnist Douglas Fisher showed overwhelming support for the anglophone controllers and pilots,[160] yet

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[156]Arpin, "Bilingualism"
[157]W.A. Wilson, "English 'wise men' are needed," *Montreal Star*, 13 August 1976: A9.
[158]see Lynda Hurst, "Why Trudeau's in trouble," *Toronto Star*, 4 September 1976: B4.
[159]Jonathan Manthorpe, "Manitobans applaud Clark on bilingualism," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 14 July 1976: 1.
[160]Douglas Fisher, "Bilingualism: the other side," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 26 July 1976: 4.

some members of the public did write letters expressing dismay over the turn the dispute had taken, one of whom summed up that point of view especially well by noting that English-speaking Canadians seemed "to treat Quebec like an enemy foreign power instead of a Canadian neighbour province."[161] But given even the impossibility of determining what part of Canada's English-speaking population was represented by the vocal few who expressed their opinions on various aspects of the dispute, one cannot underestimate the impact their words had on the outcome of the dispute. It was the "virulent anti-French reaction" and the resentment of bilingualism, not the legitimate concerns about safety or Bill 22, that determined how the anglophone press, CATCA and CALPA, and, most critically, the Trudeau government, responded to public opinion. The implication of the letters and other forms of public opinion, whatever their putative subject, was that bilingualism, and with it Trudeau's vision of Canada, simply had not been accepted by a good many English-speaking Canadians.

Anglophone public opinion and its implications caused English-language editorial comment outside Quebec to change its focus on the air traffic controllers' dispute from air safety to bilingualism. Discussion of the issue in Canada's English-language dailies was abundant as early as 1975, but until the strike most editors and writers considered the dispute to be centred on the question of safety. In the

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[161]Letter to *Star Phoenix*, Saskatoon, 16 July 1976: 25.

Vancouver Sun of August 11, 1975, for example, an editorial argued in favour of official bilingualism but stated that attempting to implement the policy in air traffic control would push bilingualism "past common sense and safety."[162] The *Sun*'s appraisal of the dispute was echoed in a *Calgary Herald* editorial, as was the tone of tolerance for institutional bilingualism. The editorial noted:

> To urge the government to return to unilingualism in the air in no way diminishes the general support many Canadians are prepared to offer the government's program of bilingualism in the federal service . . . [But] a policy that is appropriate enough on the ground doesn't have any business in the air.[163]

The *Edmonton Journal*'s editor also commented on safety in the air in a 1975 editorial, claiming that not only was there no threat to safety in the introduction of French at smaller Quebec airports but that the decision to implement French in air traffic control in Quebec was "based on safety" and followed the precedent of European airports.[164]

Newspaper commentary from Saskatchewan and Manitoba prior to June 1976 also focused on the effects of bilingual air traffic control on air safety standards, although their analyses reflected resentment of the bilingualism policy as well. The Regina *Leader Post* warned that French in the air in Quebec was but "a toe in the door" which would then be

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[162]"Pilots and patois," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 11 August 1975: 4. See also "A wing et une prière," *Vancouver Sun*, 14 May 1976: 4.

[163]"One language in the sky," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 11 August 1975: 4.

[164]"Flight language," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 12 August 1975: 4.

forced open to permit French in New Brunswick or Ottawa airspace, with safety threatened by the possibility of "a francophone linguistic chauvinist" refusing "to speak English with an anglophone pilot."[165] The *Winnipeg Tribune* remarked that while bilingualism was "costly and foolish," the concern with respect to the air traffic controllers' issue was "more than money, more than appearance. It is safety."[166] And when Otto Lang announced the appointment of the Keenan commission, the *Winnipeg Free Press* commented on the threat to safety inherent in experimenting with bilingual air traffic control, its analysis, however, betraying a stereotypic notion of French-speaking Canadians:

> It would seem that those objecting to the move are governed by logic, while the government itself appears to be motivated by the emotion of the federal Quebec members of Parliament.[167]

In Atlantic Canada most of the major dailies published editorials emphasizing the need to put safety ahead of bilingualism in the dispute, although they, too, sometimes included hints that the writers resented the federal government's policy. For example, the St. John's, Newfoundland, *Evening Telegram* wrote on May 21, 1976, that:

> The federal policy is to agree with the French-Canadian point of view. This, we suspect, is being done more in the interest of political expediency than the safety of the airline

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[165]"Bilingual proposal should be withdrawn," editorial, Regina, *Leader Post*, 17 October 1975: 35.
[166]"French in the air," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 15 December 1975: 33. See also "Politics, air safety don't go together," editorial, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 13 May 1976: 8.
[167]"French in the air," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 March 1976. See also "Safety vs. bilingualism," editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 August 1975: 29.

passenger.[168]

On May 14 of that year the *Telegraph Journal* of Saint John, New Brunswick, wrote that "from the beginning, the issue has not been bilingualism, or language rights. It has been safety."[169]

Initially, emphasis on air safety was also evident in editorials of Ontario papers, including the *Globe and Mail*. On August 12, 1975, the following appeared therein:

> What is at stake here is not a conflict between French and English; it is a conflict between clarity and confusion . . . Lives depend on clear communication between pilot and tower. That leaves room for one language only.[170]

Other Ontario editors were not convinced that safety considerations necessitated the use of only one language, but they were convinced by the pilots' argument that safety was of paramount importance. "The pilots' concern is with public safety,"[171] wrote the *Ottawa Citizen*, while the *Toronto Star* stated that the "government should not be pressured by political groups who want to promote language rights at the expense of public safety."[172] In effect, in

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[168]"Language strike," editorial, St. John's, *Evening Telegram*, 21 May 1976: 6; see also "Bilingualism first; safety second," editorial, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 30 August 1975: 8.

[169]"Bilingual nonsense," editorial, Saint John, *Telegraph Journal*, 14 May 1976: 6.

[170]"Tongue in the clouds," editorial, Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 12 August 1975: 6; see also "The language of safety,"editorial, Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 18 March 1976: 6.

[171]"Safety 1st in the skies," editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, 9 August 1975: 6; see also "Safety first," editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, December 17, 1975: 6.

[172]"Air safety comes ahead of bilingualism," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 7 August 1975: B4.

the early period of the dispute over bilingual air traffic control, there was a consensus among the print media of English-speaking Canada that as the *Ottawa Citizen* contended, "safety lies at the heart of the quarrel."[173]

But the backlash against bilingualism changed that focus almost completely. Canada's English-language newspapers reacted to their readers' antagonism by shifting the emphasis of their editorials from the question of safety in the air to that of the future of bilingualism and the future of Canada as a nation. A *Vancouver Sun* editorial of June 24, 1976, for example, called the issue one of "bilingualism and, yes, bigotry,"[174] while another *Sun* editorial pointed out that the air traffic controllers' dispute was a greater threat to national unity than conscription had been because of the existence in Quebec of the Parti québécois and the rapid emergence of an educated Québécois middle class.[175] In the *Edmonton Journal* syndicated columnist Douglas Fisher called the anglophone controllers and pilots a "mortal threat to the Liberals" in their seeming ability to tap the "deep residual resistance to [bilingualism] in English Canada." He concluded: "The key to the issue, of course, is not safety; it is simply bilingualism."[176]

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[173]"Prejudging the air inquiry," editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 May 1976: 6.
[174]Marjorie Nichols, "The issue is bigotry," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 24 June 1976: 4.
[175]Marjorie Nichols, "Bilingualism: a critical reassessment," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 26 June 1976: 4.
[176]Douglas Fisher, "Pilots are mortal threat to Liberals," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 25 June 1976: 4.

Implicit in many of the commentaries was, first, the notion that bilingualism was essential to Canadian unity, and secondly, that it served to distinguish Canadians as an especially tolerant people. One writer saw the dispute as a tragedy for bilingualism and thus for Canada. He referred to Trudeau himself as "perhaps the last of the truly great Canadians who believe passionately in the total unity of Canada."[177] In Ontario, editorials in the *Toronto Star* pointed to bilingualism as a policy "accepted by most Canadians"[178] and "approved in Parliament by all the political parties."[179] The paper also called the policy "the thread that can hold this country together as a national entity distinctive in the world"[180] and claimed that no less than "the future of Canada" was at stake should bilingualism fail.[181] Bilingualism was also seen by the *Star* as part of an historical continuum in Canadian life. Canada had advanced as a nation "by a succession of compromises," observed one editorial. "That tolerant spirit makes it repugnant to zealots . . . and unpopular with bigots."[182] The *Ottawa Citizen* placed equal faith in the power of bilingualism, among other Canadian peculiarities, to

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[177] J. Patrick O'Callaghan, "Trudeau's vision threatened," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 26 June 1976: 4.
[178] "Pilots, controllers fog safety issue," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 23 June 1976: B4.
[179] "Trudeau clears the air," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 24 June 1976: B4.
[180] "Why bilingualism is still vital," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 30 June 1976: B4.
[181] "Find a new road to bilingualism," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 26 July 1976: C4.
[182] "A land worth holding together," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 1 July 1976: C4.

strengthen the nation:

> There is nothing to fear from bilingualism if it is seen to be one of the glories of our diversity . . . We also find it easy to overlook the role played in modern Canada by those whose background is neither English nor French -- including our own native people . . . Together we represent the glory of Canada. Apart, we would have no claim to greatness at all.[183]

Another commentator believed that Canadians' ability to compromise would prevent the rupture of the nation:

> I think most of us will give up the nation we know as Canada with reluctance and will seek common ground. As we have before.[184]

Finally, in Winnipeg the *Tribune* equated the success of bilingualism with that of Canadian unity:

> If we don't want to see this nation fall apart, we must accept . . . that a two-language policy, with proper safeguards for minorities, is basic to Canada's existence.[185]

However, not all papers recognized the implications in the threat to bilingualism or jumped to its defence. Saskatchewan and Atlantic Canadian dailies clung to the safety question in their analyses, while the *Calgary Herald*, in editorial after editorial, decried the two unions, CATCA and CALPA, for their "strong-arm" tactics and "brute-force against their fellow citizens."[186] According to the *Herald*, the threat posed by the strike to official bilingualism was

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[183]Charles King, "Learning to live together," editorial, *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 July 1976: 6.
[184]Andrew Snaddon, "In search of common ground," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 3 July 1976: 4.
[185]"Possible solution -- in both languages," editorial, *Winnipeg Tribune*, 16 July 1976: 8.
[186]William Gold, "Passive citizens endanger Canada," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 8 July 1976: 6; "The settlement," editorial, *Calgary Herald*, 28 June 1976: 6.

not nearly so divisive as the power and rapacity of labour unions out of control. And anglophone newsmen across Canada, while supportive of bilingualism in principle, were quick to criticize the government's handling both of the dispute and of the whole bilingualism program.[187]

It would seem that the opinion of ordinary Canadians had little in common with that of the commentators of their daily newspapers. At one extreme, angry citizens were calling for an end to bilingualism and possibly even Quebec as a province of Canada. At the other extreme, newsmen wrote eloquently of an idyllic Canada whose people lived peaceably under the umbrella of bilingualism. But journalists and their readers did have a common ground when discussing the issue in that they seemed incapable of comprehending it from the perspective of Québécois. Quebec culture "creeping" across Canada via bilingualism was possibly no more distorted an image than that of French- and English-speaking Canadians sharing a vast, mutual homeland in the language of their choice. Both points of view assumed that Québécois embraced Trudeau's vision of a pan-Canadian "patrie" and hoped to realize it, as Trudeau did, through bilingualism. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of public opinion was how it revealed that among English-speaking Canadians outside Quebec there was not only a complete lack

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[187]see, for example, "Air dispute," editorial, *Edmonton Journal*, 26 June 1976: 4; "What stopped the planes," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June 1976: 4; "Because of Ottawa's haste," editorial, Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 21 June 1976: 6; "Not a victory," editorial, St. John's, *Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1976: 6.

of consensus concerning the kind of Canada they would like to inhabit but also almost complete lack of understanding of what Québécois themselves perceived to be their place in that Canada.

Although the onslaught of public opinion on the air traffic controllers' dispute lasted well into the summer of 1976, its effects on the two protagonists attempting to negotiate a settlement were felt much sooner. Evidence suggests that it had a significant impact on the anglophone members of CATCA and CALPA. For example, a CALPA representative who was interviewed by the *Canadian Annual Review* suggested that the crisis provoked by the public reaction may have hastened the anglophone airmen's decision to negotiate an end to their dispute.[188] Indeed, CALPA industrial relations head Ron Young as much as said so when he met with the CALPA board of directors to urge them to support his and Maley's attempts to reach a settlement. Faced with the reluctance of some of the pilots to deal with MOT, Young warned them that failure to negotiate could result in the fall of the Trudeau government.[189] After all, bilingualism may have enjoyed the support of all federal political parties, but it had been introduced by Trudeau and was identified with his government. It was also among the most controversial of Liberal policies, as language policies in Canada have tended to be, and its rejection was almost synonymous with a vote of non-confidence for the Trudeau

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[188]Saywell 77.
[189]Borins 144.

Liberals. However strident they had been in their opposition to bilingual air traffic control, anglophone members of CATCA and CALPA were not interested in bringing down a government over it.

Nor were they pleased with the tone of much of their support. The editor of *Pilot* made this clear as he attempted to divorce CALPA from the public turmoil:

> The basic issue of the technical merits or drawbacks of two-language ATC [was] almost completely obscured by the dust-clouds of hastily boarded political and racist bandwagons. Though responsible aviation spokesmen attempted to emphasize the real problem, their voices were lost in the welter of misunderstanding and emotion.[190]

In his comments there was also a hint that CALPA had softened its hard-line stance against bilingualism in an IFR environment:

> If there is an honest difference of opinion and if bilingual ATC can be shown to be acceptably safe, then of course we are prepared to be proven wrong.[191]

Unquestionably, though, a settlement was reached not so much because of CALPA's increased willingness to negotiate, but because Trudeau and his cabinet and hence MOT came to a belated and shocked recognition of the vulnerability of themselves and of their cherished bilingualism policy. And because Trudeau believed that bilingualism was essential to Canadian unity, he equated the failure of bilingualism with the failure of Confederation. In an interview in the *Globe and Mail*, Trudeau remarked:

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[190]"Let Reason Prevail," editorial, *Pilot*, Summer 1976: 2.
[191]"Let Reason Prevail"

> This country is in very serious danger of being divided on as basic an issue as has ever divided the country in the last 34 years. [The Quebecers] will say . . . "If we can't operate even within our own province in our own language, then what the hell are we doing in this country?" Do you know the answer to that? I can't answer the separatists.[192]

Both Trudeau and MOT responded to the "dangerous state of public opinion in the country,"[193] by backtracking on the commitments they had made to francophone airmen in what was an attempt to make the bilingualism policy more palatable by assuring their critics that the right of francophone airmen to speak French on their jobs would not be placed ahead of any safety considerations. The first visible evidence of their reaction was a speech made by Pierre Trudeau on prime-time television on June 23, four days into the strike. Here, he promised English-speaking Canadians:

> If it could be shown that the use of both French and English . . . is or could be a safety hazard, the federal Government would insist that only the English language be used.[194]

This statement seems to contradict the spirit if not the letter of the statement made by Lang at Dorval the previous December in which he announced that bilingualism would be progressively introduced in all of Quebec's airports, implying that the federal government had already been shown all it wanted to see with respect to the safety question. In that statement Lang could have easily appeared to be placing

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[192]John King, "Air crisis is Canada's worst since conscription, PM says," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 26 June 1976: 1.
[193]quoted in Saywell 76.
[194]"It goes to the very roots of bilingualism policy," transcript, Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 24 June 1976: 59.

bilingualism ahead of safety, which was how CALPA and CATCA interpreted him. But on June 23, Trudeau made very clear, for the first time, that safety would be the department's primary consideration.

In doing so, he made specific reference to Montreal Centre. The anglophone airmen, he charged,

> cannot be protesting against any government decision to provide [bilingual air traffic control] at Montreal, because no such decision has been made, and no such decision will be made until we know for sure that bilingual procedures will be fully consistent with air safety . . . They cannot reasonably be protesting against bilingual air traffic control in principle because it has been working safely in many countries for many years . . . What they seem to be protesting, therefore, is the very idea of even looking at the possibility of having safe bilingual control . . . provided at Montreal.[195]

The possibility, Trudeau claimed, was all MOT was actually looking at for the moment, and it would be determined, he emphasized, on the basis of safety considerations. Yet in December Lang had included Montreal Centre when he announced his intention to push ahead with the implementation of bilingual control. Indeed, the timetable for doing so had included an eight-week simulator study of bilingual control under IFR conditions.[196] It thus seems evident that the public reaction to the air traffic controllers' dispute had the effect of forcing the Trudeau Liberals to re-examine the dual roles of MOT. To this point, the department's role in the dispute had been, as we have seen, that of policy implementer rather than regulator for the aviation industry.

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[195]"It goes to the very roots"
[196]Borins 74.

Trudeau's speech hinted that henceforth MOT would emphasize its regulatory role.

Public opinion may thus have caused Trudeau and hence MOT to recognize the true extent of the dilemma they were in in attempting to implement the Official Languages Act within Quebec itself. While they could not move quickly enough to keep up with the momentum of francization in Quebec, they also seemingly could not be cautious enough to satisfy skeptical anglophone aviators or the opponents of bilingualism. Lang's announcement in December seemed to indicate that to implement the Official Languages Act and thereby prove themselves to be the guarantors of francophones' language rights was the Trudeau Liberals' priority. A scant six months later, however, the priority had shifted; from now on, Trudeau said, safety would come first. The abruptness with which MOT's mandate had turned from policy implementer back to safety regulator is incomprehensible outside the context of the backlash of public opinion against bilingualism.

That an angry public had forced MOT to change its mind is also evinced by the speed with which the department caved in to the wishes of CATCA and CALPA as the parties negotiated to return the planes to the skies. As a settlement was being worked out, both Ken Maley and Ron Young expressed surprise at how quickly MOT acceded to demands which had heretofor been ignored.[197] The strike by

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[197]Borins 146.

controllers had been abruptly halted by an injunction, but when it came time to negotiate with CALPA and CATCA, clearly the English-speaking airmen had the upper hand, and the nature of the final agreement further suggested that anglophone public opinion had as much clout as angry pilots and controllers.

Following an emergency cabinet meeting on June 26, Lang was given the mandate to arrive at a solution that would get the planes flying and find a replacement for John Keenan so that the commission of inquiry could go forward. Apart from his determination to proceed with a study of the feasibility of bilingual air traffic control, Lang appears to have placed himself at the mercy of CALPA and CATCA, an abrupt about-face from his position of the previous December. He and McLeish, his partner in negotiations, also seem to have turned a wilfully blind eye to the possible repercussions that giving in to the anglophone airmen and the noisy and surly anglophone public would have in Quebec.

In any case the final agreement, put in writing as a memorandum of understanding at CALPA's request, called for a commission of inquiry of three judicial appointees, one of whom would be chosen from a list submitted by CATCA. The commission was to examine the impact of bilingual air traffic control on safety, a legitimate enough pursuit but for some of the conditions placed on it: first, that bilingualism could not be implemented unless the commissioners agreed unanimously that it was safe and,

secondly, that the terms of reference of the agreement provide that

> the commissioners shall not in any of their reports indicate that safety has been demonstrated unless they can justify beyond a reasonable doubt why any contrary view expressed by CATCA or CALPA should not prevail.[198]

Then there was the question of francophone aviators speaking French on the job at Montreal Centre in spite of regulations forbidding them from doing so. To deal with this situation, the memorandum of understanding called for a directive restricting French in the air at least until the commission reported its findings. Finally, these findings were to be subjected to a free vote in Parliament.

One cannot conclude that such an agreement would have been impossible without the influence of English-speaking opponents of Trudeau's policy, but its terms -- which would interfere with the language rights of francophone airmen, give CATCA's and CALPA's definition of safety primacy over any other, and subject the whole bilingualism policy to a free vote -- suggest that Lang and McLeish were under enormous pressure to placate their anglophone constituents. Certainly, MOT negotiators were thinking about the threat to the bilingualism policy, rather than air safety or the expensive nuisance the strike presented, when they held up their agreement and claimed they had saved the country.[199]

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[198]Canada, Ministry of Transport, *Memorandum of Understanding* between the Minister of Transport, the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association, and the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association, quoted in Borins 249.

[199]Borins 148.

Not only did Trudeau, the mastermind of the bilingualism policy, disappoint Québécois. Both Joe Clark, leader of the opposition Conservatives, and New Democratic Party leader Ed Broadbent seemed either not to recognize the implications of both the dispute and the public outcry or to have preferred to use the situation to further their political advantage. Following Trudeau's televised speech, for example, Clark accused him of inflaming the issue by focusing on bilingualism. "Bilingualism is not the issue," he told the House of Commons.[200] After the signing of the memorandum of understanding, moreover, he expressed interest in meeting with AGAQ to discuss their concerns personally, but canceled the meeting under pressure from some members of his caucus. Broadbent was even less conciliatory. In the first place, his party supported CALPA and CATCA and even asked the governing Liberals to ensure that French was not being used where it was prohibited;[201] secondly, he focused on the "prohibitive costs" of both the commission and the implementation process.[202]

Consequently, neither Broadbent nor Clark offered Québécois a possible alternative to Trudeau's party, and in spite of their bumbling, the Liberals still appeared to be the least of evils. Indeed, Trudeau attempted in his speech to reaffirm that French in the air would not and could not be negotiated:

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[200]House of Commons *Debates*, Vol. XIV, 25 June 1976: 14835.
[201]House of Commons *Debates*, Vol. XIV, 25 June 1976: 14836.
[202]quoted in Saywell 68.

> Why not . . . require all French-speaking pilots to become fluent in English? That question, my friends, goes to the very roots of what Canada is all about . . . Parliament, in the name of all Canadians, has decided that both English- and French-speaking citizens of this country have the right to be served by their government in their own language.[203]

As well, Otto Lang told the *Toronto Star* on June 30 that he was confident in the future for bilingual air traffic control in Quebec and that the anglophone airmen's dream "that all the world in the air will speak English sometime soon" was "a losing dream."[204]

But even all of Pierre Trudeau's eloquence could not have softened the impact of the memorandum of understanding in Quebec. In belated recognition that English-speaking Canadians as well as Québécois were resisting bilingualism, Trudeau gave his approval to an agreement that was designed to salvage his policy and his government in English-speaking Canada. But, as in other crises involving Canada's founding nations, to appease one side was to inflame the other. Made under any conditions, the memorandum of understanding would have inflamed Québécois. In this instance, though, the agreement also represented an abrupt shift in the policy of implementing bilingualism in Quebec's air traffic system, and in signing it, Lang as much as announced to Québécois that the federal government could not guarantee their language rights in the face of the voluble opposition of bigots in "English Canada."

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[203]"It goes to the very roots"
[204]quoted in Saywell 80.

Public opinion in English-speaking Canada was thus a major factor in determining the direction the air traffic control conflict would take. Although it cannot be determined whether lack of understanding of Québécois' point of view, dislike of French-speakers, or opposition to bilingualism were common to the majority of English-speakers, it is evident that news commentators, aviation personnel, and the federal government alike perceived the weight of public opinion to be enough to pose a danger to Canadian unity. Each group responded accordingly. The English-language press turned its focus on the issue from safety to bilingualism and called for the realization of a Canada based on tolerance and compromise. CATCA and CALPA, cognizant of both the vulnerability and malleability of MOT, worked towards a settlement of their grievances. Finally and most critically, the backlash against bilingualism and thus against Trudeau's vision of Canada ultimately resulted in MOT's negotiating an agreement that represented an about-face in policy direction from one of progressive implementation of bilingual control in all of Quebec's airports to one of restricting the use of French therein, which amounted to forbidding Québécois to work in their own language in their own province. Thus, the government which claimed to offer a pan-Canadian homeland to French Canadians was now placing limits on the use of French within Quebec itself. This shift in the government's position was, as it turned out, a move which caused

Québécois to ask themselves if the doors of "fortress Quebec" should not perhaps be closed.

IV. "What the Hell are We Doing in This Country?"

Pierre Trudeau believed that bilingualism made it possible for Québécois to choose federalism over nationalism, official languages over an official language, as the means by which to become full partners in Confederation. But in their handling of the air traffic controllers' dispute, the federal Liberals and in particular the Ministry of Transport demonstrated to Québécois an apparent inability to support their demands for linguistic rights. The consequences of their failure to do so were severe. As commentary from the Quebec press and members of the Quebec National Assembly indicate, both anglophone and francophone Quebecers lost almost complete confidence in the federal Liberals' willingness or ability to implement bilingualism and thereby to be the protector of Québécois' right to live and work in French. As a result, what Trudeau and other supporters of bilingualism, including anglophone Quebecers, feared the most came about. Québécois turned away from the federal government in their quest for linguistic justice and looked instead to the only other option apparently open to them. If the federal Liberals could not do their part to make French the language of work in Quebec, Québécois would henceforth rely on the strength of their own province.

This attitude was most dramatically reflected in press coverage of the air traffic control conflict within Quebec. Both English- and French-language papers categorically

condemned Lang and Trudeau for the memorandum of understanding, but even before the agreement had been signed, Quebec's editors and writers of both language groups tended to see the issue in a different light from their counterparts outside the province. Most significantly, they considered the conflict from the outset to be inseparable from the broader issue of francization of the workplace. Consequently, the question of air safety did not receive the same emphasis in Quebec's English-language press as it had in other parts of Canada, and scant attention at all in French-language papers. *Montreal Gazette* columnist Gretta Chambers noted this absence in an analysis written after the strike:

> Bilingual air control and flight deck communications may have a high safety component but that aspect of the question is unlikely to become an issue in Quebec.[205]

Instead, commentators from both English- and French-language papers reflected the viewpoints of les gens de l'air, more often accusing CATCA and CALPA of "racism," of misrepresenting the safety aspect, and of denying a group of Québécois their fundamental rights. On May 18, 1976, for example, the *Montreal Gazette* stated that les gens de l'air

> have every reason to believe their CATCA compatriots are reacting out of anti-French feeling rather than fear of unsafe flying because the anglophones have presented no conclusive evidence that bilingualism means less safety.[206]

La Presse argued that anglophone controllers who could not

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[205]Chambers, "Political parties"
[206]"Bilingual air traffic control," editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 18 May 1976: 8.

communicate in French "simply can't accomplish a public function in Quebec." The writer gave two reasons for this conclusion; first, that "safety arguments play in favour of the adoption of two languages," and secondly, that "all unilingual francophones must have the possibility of living in their language in Quebec, on the ground or in the air."[207] *Le Devoir* suggested that bilingual controllers' use of French in the presence of unilingual anglophones caused them "psychological discomfort." The same editorial also pointed out that two-language control conformed to ICAO regulations, practices in European airports, and principles of justice in Quebec.[208]

The attitude that safety concerns were ill-motivated seemed to solidify once the pilots and controllers walked off their jobs and during the events that followed. In the English-language press CALPA was said to have "distorted" "the moderation of the government's approach" to the implementation of bilingual air traffic control and therefore was guilty of "injecting an ugly note of racism into the Canada-wide consensus on bilingualism."[209] On June 23, five days into the pilots' walkout, the *Montreal Star* condensed all of the arguments of les gens de l'air into one editorial:

> The issue of safety is being used . . . to

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[207]Jean-Guy Dubuc, "Le Québec est aussi en hauteur," editorial, Montreal, *La Presse*, 13 August 1975: A4.
[208]Michel Roy, "L'inconfort du français," editorial, Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 14 October 1975: 4.
[209]"Bilingualism backlash," editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 23 June 1976: 6.

> legitimize a prejudice against bilingualism . . . Its ultimate result will be to make French-speaking Canadians second class citizens in Canada's air industry and to preserve the position of a privileged group of anglophones. [The pilots' campaign] provides a focal point for all the prejudice and bigotry which still simmer in this country.[210]

It went on to argue that bilingual air traffic control was "simple justice" for French-speaking Quebecers.

French-language papers took similar points of view. In pointing out that bilingual control was a fact of aviation life in other countries, for example, *La Voix de l'Est* of Granby quoted Jean LeMenach's argument that anglophone controllers were concerned more with job security than safety.[211] A much less generous assessment of the anglophone pilots' and controllers' motivations was provided in *La Presse*. "Racism," cloaked in the guise of safety, determined their positions, the paper said.

> It is absolutely and totally wrong to pretend that in Quebec the use of French by francophone pilots and controllers in the communications with the control tower presents an element of danger.[212]

While it is understandable that the francophone press would consider the air traffic control conflict to be a conflict over language rights rather than safety, it is

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[210]"The new attempt to legitimize bigotry," editorial, *Montreal Star*, 25 June 1976: A10.
[211]"Le bilinguisme existe partout sauf dans les pays anglophones," Granby, *La Voix de l'Est*, 23 June 1976: 7. See also Bertrand Tremblay, "Après Bourassa, Trudeau goûte à la médecine du chantage . . ." editorial, Chicoutimi, *Le Quotidien*, 3 July 1976: 4; Roger Lacroix, "'L'experience du bilinguisme est probante'," Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, *Le Canada-Français*, 14 July 1976: 10.
[212]Jean-Guy Dubuc, "Il y a du racisme dans l'air," editorial, Montreal, *La Presse*, October 16, 1975: A4.

perhaps less obvious why English-language papers would hold similar positions and thus contrast rather sharply with what the anglophone press outside Quebec was saying before the strike. The major factors accounting for their stance, apart from the proximity to the major protagonists of the dispute, may well have been anglophone Quebecers' vested interest in the success of bilingualism.

In the English-language press in Quebec the air traffic controllers' dispute was analyzed within the context of the realization of Québécois' language rights. Both major anglophone dailies, the *Montreal Gazette* and *Montreal Star*, saw the issue as one having broad implications, first of all, for the right of French-speaking Canadians to be equally represented in federal institutions. As the *Gazette* noted:

> The resolution of this dispute may be as much a watershed in the development of linguistic equality as was the dispute over the lack of francophone executives in CN, which helped to prompt the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.[213]

As well, Montreal dailies considered the conflict to be part of the struggle by Québécois to work in French in their own province. Writing in the *Montreal Star*, Dominique Clift outlined the relationship between some English-speakers' attitudes towards bilingual air traffic control and other realms where francization was being attempted:

> The francization program authorized under Bill 22 is being challenged on the grounds that the international language of business communication is

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[213]"Control in 2 languages," editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 10 June 1976: 8.

> English . . . Resistance to a wider use of French follows a pattern which is easily perceptible for most Quebecers. And the interruption of services by air controllers and pilots is seen as a part of a continuing struggle to maintain the prevalence of English.[214]

These comments indicate support for bilingualism for its potential to enable francophones to be served in French by the federal government and as well to contribute to the movement towards francization of the workplace in Quebec itself. But English-language commentary from Quebec also carried a warning: legislation such as Bill 22 was part of an ominous trend towards a unilingual Quebec and only acceptance of bilingualism could reverse it. Gretta Chambers of the *Gazette* saw the air traffic control conflict as one that might enable the Bourassa government to consolidate his government's position on the language issue. Bourassa's view was, as Chambers pointed out, that

> If the weight of the federal government cannot force the acceptance of the French language in Quebec airports, it is obviously up to the provincial government to assume full responsibility for the fate of the French language in Canada.[215]

She warned that the English "unilingualism" revealed by the backlash beyond Quebec's borders could easily lead to French unilingualism, with its consequent erosion of anglophones' language rights within Quebec.[216] In her articles Chambers reflected the overall position of the *Gazette* with respect

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[214]Dominique Clift, "Free vote test of national unity," editorial, *Montreal Star*, 29 June 1976: A11.
[215]Chambers, "Political parties"
[216]Gretta Chambers, "Tension apparent in aviation bilingualism issue is infectious," *Montreal Gazette*, 22 June 1976: 7.

to the federal and provincial language Acts: bilingualism and not Bill 22 would protect Canadian unity. Thus, the Gazette even supported Trudeau's dictum to federal Crown corporations operating in Quebec not to seek the francization certificates provided for in Bill 22:

> Mr. Trudeau, guaranteeing the use of French as well as English in air control, guaranteeing also the use of English as well as French in the great crown corporations of this province, is holding true to policies that are at the heart of Canadian continuity.[217]

Opposition by Quebec's anglophones to Bill 22 was fundamental to their support of les gens de l'air. As Montreal broadcaster John Robertson noted, "both fights assume that this is supposed to be a bilingual country."[218]

In their support for bilingualism English-language commentators in Quebec sometimes revealed the same assumptions about Canadian unity as their counterparts outside the province. "A country of two intermeshing linguistic communities" was how one *Gazette* editorial defined Canada,[219] while in another, this time in the *Star*, Richard Gwyn commented on the apathy expressed to him about the possibility of Quebec quitting Confederation. He believed that Canadians would lose little economically or culturally in that event; the loss, he said, would be more fundamental:

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[217]"Struggle and endeavour," editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 14 July 1976: 8.
[218]quoted in Graham Fraser, "The Plains of Abraham, Part Two," *Maclean's*, 18 October 1976: 19.
[219]"Canada up in the air," editorial, *Montreal Gazette*, 2 July 1976: 8.

> The real loss would be inside ourselves. We would have rejected our own personality. If Canadians have any claim to international distinction it is because, dull and introverted and all the rest of it, we have as a people a natural gift at compromise . . . Separation . . . would bring us . . . less freedom within ourselves. We wouldn't be Canadians anymore. Just a bunch of people living in a cold climate.[220]

Letters from Quebec's English-speakers, published in the *Gazette* and *Star*, indicate a consensus among anglophone Quebecers that bilingualism was necessary and desirable, not least because it presented an alternative to Bill 22 and its implications. Of 50 letters examined, six were opposed to the federal policy, only two of which couched their opposition in the anti-French epithets too commonly seen in anglophones' responses beyond Quebec's borders. Of the remainder, nine believed that bilingualism in air traffic control would be unsafe, with seven stating the opposite, indicating that as in the other provinces safety was not of primary importance in anglophone Quebecers' minds. The balance of letters to the anglophone dailies of Montreal carried a prevalent message, that not only did Québécois' language rights have to be recognized by English-speakers but also that if they wanted rights, they ought to be willing to grant them. Bill 22, readers claimed, denied Quebec's English-speakers their fundamental language rights and thereby made a mockery of Ottawa's attempts to implement its policy of official bilingualism. One angry *Gazette*

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[220]Richard Gwyn, "The separatist tide in English Canada," editorial, *Montreal Star*, 9 July 1976: A7.

reader had this to say:

> The condition now existing in Quebec [is] one in which the anglophones have more than an inkling that they are persona non grata in their own country.[221]

Other readers called Bill 22 "racist" and "an instrument of oppression of English people."[222] In spite, or more likely because of, the anger engendered by Quebec anglophones over Bill 22, there was revealed in letters to their papers a notion of bilingualism as a tie that bound Canada's peoples to one another, a tie that was perhaps even their only means of survival.[223] Thus, while in their reactions to the air traffic controllers' dispute anglophone Quebecers focused on the issue as one of language rights, they had their own rights in mind as much as they did those of Québécois, and there seemed to be a consensus that bilingualism had to succeed if they were to continue to be able to live in English in Quebec.

There was no such consensus on bilingualism in the francophone press. In an astute analysis of Quebec politics after the air crisis journalist Dominique Clift noted that the conflict revealed the limits of French power in Ottawa and forced French-speakers to choose between Trudeau and Bourassa. Québécois' two options were, he continued, to support a strong central government in Ottawa, which required "collective confidence in the Canadian political

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[221]Letter to *Montreal Gazette*, 2 July 1976: 8.
[222]Letters to *Montreal Gazette*, 2 June, 12 June 1976: 8; *Montreal Star*, 17 July 1976: F7.
[223]Letters to *Montreal Star*, 26 July 1976: A6; *Montreal Gazette*, 30 June, 13 July 1976: 8.

processes," or to limit their participation in the Canadian system "to matters affecting the economy, social security and fiscal policies." In Clift's view,

> this would mean in effect a partial withdrawal from the Canadian system in favor of a certain degree of isolation and retrenchment.[224]

He concluded that in the atmosphere of skepticism created by the fight for bilingual air traffic control, Québécois were much more likely to choose the provincial Liberals to protect their right to live and work in French.

That Québécois were indeed making such a choice is evident from the editorials and commentaries concerning the air traffic controllers' dispute in the francophone press. Writers and editors throughout Quebec were unanimous in supporting les gens de l'air. Significant in their analyses, moreover, were the conclusions drawn about the place of Ottawa and its bilingualism policy in ensuring the future survival of the French language. Some newsmen had obviously, as Claude Ryan of *Le Devoir* expressed it, "made the federalist wager,"[225] but the dispute was forcing them to rethink their faith in federalism and thus in bilingualism. Other editors and writers, though, were completely skeptical, and Ottawa's overtures on behalf of anglophone "racists" only confirmed their already held suspicions that the federal government was not willing to protect their rights if "English Canada" opposed its efforts to do so.

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[224]Clift, "Free vote"
[225]Claude Ryan, "Les leçons d'un échec humiliant," editorial, Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 30 June 1976: 4.

Even before the dispute's climax in the summer of 1976 Québécois commentators expressed doubt about the ability of Ottawa to be the guarantor of their rights in the face of the abiding animosity of English-speaking Canadians towards the French fact. A Sherbrooke *Tribune* article assessed the situation this way:

> Our national bilingualism, as is defined in the federal act of 1969, is gleaming with bold principles about the rights of the two principal ethnic groups. But its concrete application in administration is carried out against the current of an old unilingual English mentality and a background of racism regarding haulers of water without a history.[226]

The *Tribune* editor believed that anglophone controllers feared the "growing hold" of French in Quebec and warned later that "in each Québécois a little Lévesque is dormant."[227] The federal government, the francophone press warned long before the infamous memorandum of understanding, had placed its credibility in jeopardy. In May of 1976, for example, Michel Roy of *Le Devoir* claimed that the establishment of a commission of inquiry under John Keenan proved that the federal government was unwilling to take responsibility for the implementation of its own policy.[228] The editor of the Trois Rivières daily, *Le Nouvelliste*, agreed, remarking in December 1975 that Quebec's Members of Parliament handled the Official Languages Act like a hot

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[226]"Une gaffe révélatrice," editorial, Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*, 12 December 1975: 4.
[227]Jean Desclos, "Pas mort, le separatisme?" editorial, Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*, 14 May 1976: 4.
[228]Michel Roy, "Aurons-nous la grève du bilinguisme aérien?" editorial, *Le Devoir*, 17 May 1976: 4.

potato, with no one daring to assume responsibility for its full application.[229] This writer went on to say that the air traffic controllers' dispute reflected a weakness in Bill 22; namely, that federal institutions operating in Quebec were not subject to its requirements. Nevertheless, he concluded, the spirit of Bill 22 was to entrench French as the language of work in Quebec, and he called for the provincial government to defend that in principle even though it might lack the power to enforce it.[230] News editors and writers in Quebec's two major cities took positions similar to those of the regional papers in this early period of the dispute. Writing in Montreal's *La Presse*, for example, Jean-Guy Dubuc called on Trudeau to prove he was serious about bilingualism,[231] while Paul LaChance of *Le Soleil* said that the government's dithering over bilingualism "constitutes a very serious breach in the building of a realistic charter of linguistic rights in the country."[232]

In the perception of most of the francophone editorialists prior to the climax of the crisis, the anglophone members of CATCA and CALPA were the villains of the drama. If concerns for safety had not motivated them,

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[229]"Les misères de la langue," editorial, Trois Rivières, *Le Nouvelliste*, 11 December 1975: 4.
[230]"Les misères;" see also Jean-Guy Dubuc, "L'arrogance des forts," editorial, Montreal, *La Presse*, 10 December 1975: A4; Paul Girard, "Le transport aéronautique en français," editorial, Drummondville, *La Parole*, 17 December 1975: 4.
[231]Dubuc, "L'arrogance"
[232]Paul LaChance, "La logique de l'illogisme," editorial, Quebec, *Le Soleil*, 7 June 1976: A4.

fanaticism certainly had, and commentators from the beginning described English-speaking members of CATCA and CALPA in these terms. "They bully in a manner that makes them the envy of Americans opposed to racial integration," said one commentator,[233] while *Montréal-Matin* accused the anglophone airmen of "shameless blackmail."[234] Of all the editors and writers who condemned the position taken by the anglophone airmen, Michel Roy of *Le Devoir* perhaps best captured Québécois' sentiments about them:

> The government and population of Quebec presently confront the most unrelenting establishment of unilingualism, powerful enough to exercise all forms of blackmail . . . and for whom transportation in this country cannot function except in English.[235]

It was as though CATCA and CALPA embodied the anglophone elite which had for so long kept Québécois in their inferior niche.

Press coverage of the issue prior to the strike was generally limited to the papers of the larger centres. As the dispute gained greater notoriety in late June of 1976, however, it became a major issue in the eyes of all Québécois. Editorials appeared in the tiniest regional weeklies, while in Montreal and Quebec City, French in the air was subjected to daily analysis. But all papers seemed to be asking the same questions. Did MOT, and by extension

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[233]Jean Vigneault, "M. Lang, est-il francophone?" editorial, Trois Rivières, *Le Nouvelliste*, 3 June 1976: 6. See also Dubuc, "Il y a du racisme"

[234]Marc Laurendeau, "L'échec des gens de l'air," editorial, *Montréal-Matin*, reprinted in *Le Nouvelliste*, 8 June 1976: 6.

[235]Michel Roy, "Air Canada dans les deux langues," editorial, Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 9 June 1976: 4.

the Trudeau government, have the wherewithal to enforce their own legislation? Or were the prerogatives of "English Canada" simply too powerful to resist? To the francophone commentators the answers to these questions were also markedly similar. Ottawa, they said with greater and greater vehemence and certitude as the fight for bilingual skies intensified, was failing in its efforts to guarantee the language rights of Québécois. To many commentators, it had already failed, and Québécois would have to reassess their relationship with the rest of Canada. The "old issue," it seemed, was as fully revived in its latest version in Quebec as it had been in the other provinces.

Putting the best face on the situation was the staunch federalist Claude Ryan. Although he agreed with Trudeau that it was "the very essence of the country" which was at stake,[236] he expressed confidence that most anglophones supported bilingualism, citing the positions of some English-language dailies to support his contention. Moreover, he pointed out that bilingualism had already borne durable fruit, evinced by the presence of francophones in the highest echelons of government, and was convinced that still more progress was possible. After all, bilingualism was an ambitious dream, and Ryan "never believed that the question of Canadian unity would be settled inside of two mandates of a single prime minister."[237] But even Ryan was

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[236]Claude Ryan, "Le test d'une politique," editorial, Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 25 June 1976: 4.
[237]Claude Ryan, "Le Canada anglais, aurait-il son voyage?" Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 10 July 1976: 4. See also "Souci de la

unsure about bilingualism's applicability to the situation in Quebec. In comparing the federal Act with Bill 22, Ryan noted:

> [Bill 22] institutes the primacy of French in the various sectors of collective life, whereas Mr. Trudeau would have hoped to use Quebec bilingualism to justify his own plan of linguistic equality across the country. But in fact, bilingualism . . . has never been part of the vocation of Quebec. Quebec is for all intents and purposes . . . a French-speaking territory.[238]

The turning point of the air traffic control conflict in both English- and French-speaking Canada was the strike by the pilots' union, which gave the less reasonable opponents of bilingualism the opportunity to express their animosity and caused the Trudeau Liberals to take a step backward in implementing their policy. This backward move was concretized in the memorandum of understanding, and the signing of this agreement, possibly more so than any other event connected with the dispute, galvanized an already skeptical francophone population and marked the point at which Québécois' faith in Ottawa was most severely challenged. Following the memorandum of understanding even Claude Ryan's comments seemed to indicate that Québécois' skepticism about bilingualism was justified. He remarked on the apparent "twilight" of Trudeau's career and observed that it gave one a better understanding of why Québécois

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[237](cont'd) sécurité ou fanatisme," *Le Devoir*, 26 June 1976: 4; "Est-ce l'échec et la fin du French Power?" editorial, *Le Devoir*, 3 July 1976: 4.

[238]quoted in Rob Bull, "The language act: an assault on bilingualism from Quebec," *Montreal Gazette*, 26 August 1976: 6.

tended not to put their hopes for justice in federalism.

> Wisdom . . . has always inclined the Québécois to reserve for the only government over which they are assured permanent control the numerous domains directly touching their collective life. The Québécois' priority attachment to the government closest to them has often shocked Mr. Trudeau. It was, in reality, the foundation of the power which Mr. Trudeau and his friends have been able to enjoy in Ottawa.[239]

Other commentators of other daily papers in Quebec continued to support the federal policy following the memorandum of understanding, but their confidence in the Trudeau government's ability or willingness to implement the policy was clearly waning. In Quebec City, for example, *Le Soleil*'s writers questioned Trudeau's motivations for proclaiming the Official Languages Act in the first place:

> For more than a century, Ottawa has been almost entirely disinterested in its responsibility to use its weight in favour of the French language . . . A great number believe this policy . . . was inspired less by a sense of justice to francophones than by the wish to preserve the existence of the country by causing the failure of Quebec separatism.[240]

A later editorial in the same paper stated that bilingualism was the means by which Canada could remain united and thereby resist being swallowed by the United States. But the writer was very critical of the "fanaticism" that both linguistic groups had shown over the months, stating that their unwillingness to compromise was "the best way to drive straight towards the thing each of them is trying to avoid: the loss of its own identity" through assimilation with

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[239]Ryan, "Les leçons"
[240]Paul La Chance, "Un pavé dans la mare au diable," editorial, Quebec City, *Le Soleil*, 30 June 1976: A4.

their powerful neighbour.[241] In Montreal, moreover, *La Presse* accused Trudeau and his government of seeming "impotent in the face of blackmail" by anglophone pilots and argued that in future it would have to find a long-term solution to stand up not only to pilots and controllers but also to the executives of Air Canada and force them "to respect the Official Languages Act."[242]

Outside the two major cities even commentators who supported bilingualism seemed in the wake of Lang's agreement to have lost faith in the ability of the federal government to implement it. *Le Nouvelliste* of Trois Rivières expressed this viewpoint most succinctly:

> We are convinced that Trudeau and his francophone ministers and deputies truly want to establish bilingualism in Canada. But we aren't so convinced that they possess the unconditional support of the majority of their anglophone colleagues.[243]

Le Progrès-Dimanche of Chicoutimi called for Quebec MPs to force an "energetic reclamation of francophone rights," but asked: "Does there remain in them sufficient courage, individually and collectively, to do so?"[244] Similar assessments of the Trudeau Liberals also appeared in *L'Union* of Victoriaville and the *Pharillon-Voyageur* of the Gaspé. "The credibility of the Official Languages Act is now in

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[241]Gilles Boyer, "Il y a plus que la langue," editorial, Quebec City, *Le Soleil*, 27 September 1976: A4.
[242]Marcel Adam, "Devant le fanatisme, la logique," editorial, Quebec City, *Le Soleil*, 28 June 1976: A4.
[243]Sylvio Saint-Amant, "Une lutte à finir," editorial, Trois Rivières, *Le Nouvelliste*, 30 June 1976: 6; see also Saint-Amant, "Sur le sentier de la guerre," editorial, *Le Nouvelliste*, 6 August 1976: 6.
[244]Lucien Edmond, "Sur le 'contrôle' des contrôleurs," editorial, Chicoutimi, *Le Progrès-Dimanche*, 4 July 1976: 6.

great danger in the eyes of French Canadians," warned *L'Union*,[245] while the Gaspé weekly termed Canadian bilingualism "a slightly naive illusion."[246] Finally, in Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*'s editor wrote that

> Ten years of slow and temperate bilingualism have not effaced 100 years of ferocious unilingualism; an official languages law does not change mentalities forged in the cradle.[247]

He concluded that Québécois could no longer be sure that bilingualism was possible or whether, consequently, Canada was possible either. The air traffic control dispute might well call for "drastic remedies." "The fundamental question," the *Tribune* told its readers, was "whether Québécois really have a place in this Confederation."[248]

While the memorandum of understanding generated blanket condemnation by the French-language press, one of its provisions was evidently regarded as being particularly odious. This was the stipulation that the use of French in Quebec's control towers be halted until the commission of inquiry reported its findings. In essence, said francophone commentary, MOT and thus the federal government not only were abysmal failures at enhancing the use of French but also were denying Québécois the right to speak it even in

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[245]Marcel Duchesneau, "Un geste inacceptable du gouvernement fédéral," editorial, Victoriaville, *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, 6 July 1976: A4.
[246]Bernard Bélanger, "Une belle victoire pour les pilotes francophones," editorial, Gaspé, *Pharillon-Voyageur*, 16 September 1976: 4.
[247]Jean Vigneault, "Le bilinguisme, est-il possible?" editorial, Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*, 12 July 1976: 4.
[248]Jean Desclos, "Un anniversaire gênant," editorial, Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*, 1 July 1976: 4.

Quebec. An editorial in *La Presse*, for example, condemned the Trudeau Liberals for "almost singlehandedly" forbidding bilingualism and for failing to defend their fellow Québécois in the airmen's language dispute even though "the anglophones outside of Quebec are all united with Quebec's anglophone minority in denouncing and detesting Bill 22."[249] The *Joliette Journal* agreed and blamed the federal Liberals, particularly Otto Lang, for fuelling a crisis which had "shaken the essence of Canada." The memorandum of understanding, the *Journal* stated, gave Quebec's indépendantistes ample reason to believe that the anglophone majority "will always be able to impose its law on a francophone minority." Although the Official Languages Act at one time had enabled Québécois to believe in Canadian unity, that belief had been eroded by the air traffic control conflict; as a result, Québécois were being forced to reject federalism, perhaps even the profitable kind espoused by Bourassa:

> Québécois today have a political arm which they can well use in the next provincial election if in Ottawa they do their utmost to prove that the French language doesn't even have a place in Quebec.[250]

And in Sorel *La Voix Métropolitaine* wrote:

> it is now becoming impossible for [Trudeau] to make Quebecers believe that French is also a Canadian language when Ottawa . . . forbids it in certain cases.[251]

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[249]Adam, "Devant le fanatisme"

[250]Jean-Pierre Malo, "Une situation inacceptable pour les québécois," editorial, *Joliette Journal*, 7 July 1976: A4.

[251]Yvon Beaudry, "La minute de vérité a-t-elle sonné pour M. Trudeau?" editorial, Sorel, *La Voix Métropolitaine*, 6 July 1976.

Bilingualism, the editorial went on to say, was in reality addressed only to Québécois, but "even so had caused English-speaking Canadians to revolt and "challenge Québécois even in Quebec."[252]

If federalists had no cause to be reassured by the tone of the critiques leveled at MOT for the memorandum of understanding, they would certainly have despaired at some of the resolutions offered for the crisis of confidence provoked by Lang's agreement. One revolved around the question of conferring equal status on French and English in Quebec, which was a fundamental precept of bilingualism. Even though the intent of the policy was, in practice, to enhance the use of French in Quebec, some commentators at the time pointed out that that objective could never be reached if French and English had equal weight in Quebec, and that Québécois' understanding of this fact had led them to reject bilingualism. According to the Sherbrooke *Tribune*:

> The Québécois have reason to say "French in Quebec, English elsewhere . . ." Because if there isn't French in Quebec there will not be English elsewhere but English everywhere, including Quebec.[253]

In other words, guaranteeing equality of the two languages in Quebec would in effect destroy the chances of their ever reaching an equilibrium in Canada. Bill 22, on the other hand, would ensure that equilibrium by consolidating as far as possible "the way of life and the rights of French in

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[252]Y. Beaudry, "La minute"
[253]Jean Desclos, "Serions-nous des fanatiques?" editorial, Sherbrooke, *La Tribune*, 19 July 1976: 4.

Quebec."[254] Ottawa's French-language paper, *Le Droit*, agreed with this contention and called for a "redefinition" of bilingualism within Quebec, of which laws such as Bill 22 would be an integral part. In effect, Québécois had to be assured of their right to be unilingual, which meant that they had to be able to work in their mother tongue. Bilingualism's reception in Quebec had been lukewarm precisely because it did not go far enough to entrench this right:

> Québécois and other French Canadians don't believe or disbelieve in bilingualism; they submit to it. What they reproach in Confederation and what they are trying to correct with Bill 22 is that they don't have any choice except to be bilingual, often even to have the most humble of jobs.[255]

Other solutions called for the degrees "of isolation and retrenchment" that Clift spoke of, ranging from even more autonomy for Quebec over its internal affairs to outright separation. In Valleyfield, for example, articles by historian Jean-Pierre Wallot in *Le Progrès de Valleyfield* pointed out that not only was "French Power" in Ottawa unable to ensure Québécois full partnership in Confederation, but it also threatened the protection afforded by the Quebec government. Provincial autonomy, in effect, was being snatched away by Ottawa, yet

> only insofar as we are strong and autonomous at home in a great number of areas will we be able to contribute strongly to the Canadian and North

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[254]Desclos, "Serions-nous"
[255]Fay La Rivière, "Le bilinguisme à redéfinir," editorial, Ottawa, *Le Droit*, 13 July 1976: 6.

American whole.[256]

From this writer's point of view the air traffic controllers' dispute had brought this reality home by reminding Québécois of their minority status in Canadian political life, just as other crises had done. The conflict had once more raised the question that had the most troubling implications for the future of Confederation, the question of just how much provincial autonomy Quebec should seek from Ottawa. "French Canada, by force of circumstances, defines itself more and more as Quebec," and the circumstances surrounding the battle over French in the air only underscored the necessity to do so.

> The separatists find themselves with a striking example to support their argument. But even Bourassa . . . would be able to profit from the situation in order to further substantiate his offensives for even greater autonomy in social and cultural matters.[257]

It is evident that in calling for a greater degree of autonomy for Quebec, francophone commentators no longer believed in Ottawa's ability or willingness to guarantee their rights within the federal system. The same loss of confidence resulted in proposals for even more drastic remedies for the federal government's apparent malaise. If the federal system could not offer even the minimal guarantee of the right to work in French in Quebec, then Quebec might just as well quit the federal system. This was

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[256]Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Le devenir Québécois passe par l'autonomie," *Le Progrès de Valleyfield*, 9 June 1976: 4.
[257]Jean-Pierre Wallot, "La 'crise' à Ottawa: la réalité demeure, les rêves passent . . ." *Le Progrès de Valleyfield*, 7 July 1976: 4.

a viewpoint that developed some currency in several regional newspapers, although the Quebec City and Montreal presses did not share it. The editor of *L'Éclaireur-Progrès* of Saint-Georges Est, for example, claimed that the air traffic control conflict had demonstrated that French-speakers could no longer believe in bilingualism's "being implemented in this immense country that is Canada."[258] And the weekly paper of the Mauricie region wrote that the message from Ottawa could not have been clearer: Canada was a unilingual English country. Anglophones had demonstrated that belief since Riel and were reiterating it once again in 1976.[259] *Le Quotidien* of Chicoutimi echoed that view, remarking that with Ottawa's capitulation to anglophone interests through the memorandum of understanding, French had been relegated to the realm of a "folklorish" language, much like Indian tongues.[260] In such a Canada, Québécois had no place. "Either Quebec becomes independent or we resign ourselves to disappearing as a people and a nation."[261] Resolving the language question, according to these regional papers, was integral to every aspect of French-speakers' daily lives. As *La Voix Métropolitaine* concluded, "it is inseparable from our desire for liberation in all sectors: political,

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[258]Pier Dutil, "Le français menacé," editorial, Saint-Georges Est, *L'Éclaireur-Progrès*, 7 July 1976: 4.
[259]Raymond Page, "Au Canada . . ." editorial, Saint-Tite, *Le Dynamique de la Mauricie*, 7 July 1976: 4.
[260]Bertrand Tremblay, "Les rebelles de l'air veulent tuer le bilinguisme," editorial, Chicoutimi, *Le Quotidien*, 28 June 1976: 4.
[261]Page, "Au Canada"

economic and social."[262] *L'Étoile d'Outaouais-Saint-Laurent* called upon the federal Liberals to prove that their policy amounted to more than just "empty formulas." But the air traffic control dispute itself, the paper added, indicated that it was

> very clear that separatists are not only found in Quebec. There are those . . . who would really like to see Quebec slam the door, because it is becoming a partner that is more and more demanding of her rights.[263]

In Sept-Îles the spectre of separatism, this time by Québécois, was also invoked. Previously, remarked an editorial in *L'Élan Sept-Ilien*, it was a few agitators who were attempting to incite Québécois to independence, but "today it's our neighbours pushing us there."[264] Similarly, the *Joliette Journal* held that bilingualism was necessary in Quebec purely because of the province's place on a prosperous English-speaking continent,[265] yet the guarantee of linguistic rights was even more essential, and the government's actions had done little to reassure Québécois that their rights could be safeguarded within the federal arrangement. If they could not, though, Québécois would have to "make the sad decision to guarantee our rights in an independent Quebec.[266]

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[262]"Vivre en français après deux siècles de domination," Sorel, *La Voix Métropolitaine*, 22 June 1976: 14.
[263]Marcel Toupin, "Illusoire unité de mon pays," editorial, Dorion, *L'Étoile d'Outaouais-Saint-Laurent*, 1 July 1976: 4.
[264]"Des questions sérieuses se posent pour les québécois," editorial, Sept-Îles, *L'Élan Sept-Ilien*, 7 July 1976: 4.
[265]"Le bilinguisme au Canada," editorial, *Joliette Journal*, 28 July 1976: A4.
[266]Jean-Pierre Malo, "L'attitude décevante et

These viewpoints coincided with public opinion on the issue. For example, the anglophone airmen's argument that safety would be jeopardized by bilingual air traffic control was held in little esteem by Québécois who wrote their daily or weekly papers on the issue. Some readers called the safety question simply a "false pretext,"[267] while others, like the editors of the papers they read, claimed that the anglophone controllers were motivated by anti-French sentiments.[268] With respect to the memorandum of understanding the French-speaking members of the public were unanimous. It was a humiliating gesture on the part of the federal government, they said,[269] and one which denied them the right to speak French even in Quebec. "We can't even work at home and among ourselves in our own language," said one reader.[270] Forcing Québécois to speak English, said another, made bilingualism "an official myth, an institutionalized lie."[271]

That Ottawa had been a party to their humiliation and to the denial of their rights seemed to prove to the Québécois public, as it had to their newspapers' editors,

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[266](cont'd) discriminatoire d'Ottawa," editorial, *Joliette Journal*, 4 August 1976: A4.
[267]Letters to *La Parole*, Drummondville, 14 July 1976: 30; *La Presse*, Montreal, 7 July 1976: A5; *Le Soleil*, Quebec City, 7 July 1976: A4.
[268]Letters to *Le Nouvelliste*, Trois Rivières, 30 September 1976: 6; *Le Soleil*, Quebec City, 3 August, 9 August 1976: A4; *La Presse*, Montreal, 7 July 1976: A15.
[269]Letters to *La Presse*, Montreal, 7 July 1976: A5, 7 July 1976: A15.
[270]Letter to *La Presse*, Montreal, 7 July 1976: A15; see also letter to *Le Nouvelliste*, Trois Rivières, 5 July 1976: 6.
[271]Letter to *La Presse*, Montreal, 1 July 1976: A5.

that the federal government could not be trusted to be the guarantor of their language rights. "The law of the strongest reigns in Canada," one reader pointed out,[272] while another dismissed bilingualism as "utopian," claiming that Trudeau had demonstrated through his government's handling of the air traffic controllers' dispute his inability to overcome the prejudices of English-speaking Canadians.[273]

The public's solutions to the crisis of confidence in the federal government also resembled those of the news commentators. Said a Sherbrooke *Tribune* reader:

> End the illusion of special status and of two equal societies. It's time to take our affairs into our own hands.[274]

A letter to the *Joliette Journal* called for saving the French language in Quebec "at whatever price,"[275] while a Drummondville citizen stated regretfully that

> Canada is great and beautiful, but perhaps it would be better for us to live in a smaller country, Quebec.[276]

Readers of the separatist paper *Le Jour* were more categorical in their rejection of federalism and called for independence as the only possible means for Québécois to be able to live at home in their own language.[277]

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[272]Letter to *Le Droit*, Ottawa, 2 July 1976: 6.
[273]Letter to *La Presse*, Montreal, 1 July 1976: A5. See also letter to *Le Nouvelliste*, Trois Rivières, 5 July 1976: 6.
[274]Letter to *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, 8 July 1976: 5. See also letter to *La Presse*, Montreal, 7 July 1976: A15.
[275]Letter to *Joliette Journal*, 29 September 1976: A10.
[276]Letter to *La Parole*, Drummondville, 12 July 1976: 4.
[277]Letters to *Le Jour*, Montreal, 17 December 1975: 19; 12 July 1976: 11; 13 July 1976: 19.

Newspaper editors and readers were joined in their views by city and town councils and some noteworthy individuals, who saw the battle being waged by les gens de l'air as a symbol of the aspirations of Québécois to entrench the French language in all aspects of daily life in Quebec. It was a fight "that concerns all Québécois" announced the councils of Saint-Antoine and Saint-Jerôme.[278] In also granting "moral support" to les gens de l'air, the Plessisville town council stated in a resolution that "the recognition of the French language on our own territory" was at stake. A similar resolution was also passed by Joliette's town council.[279] Finally, celebrities from singer Pauline Julien to hockey legend Maurice Richard expressed their support for the francophone airmen.[280]

English- and French-speakers in Quebec were unanimous in their support of the francophone aviators and in their condemnation of the turn the dispute had taken with the signing of the memorandum of understanding. But they were not in agreement about what response would be the appropriate one. Anglophone Quebecers wanted to see bilingualism accepted and Bill 22 defeated, while Québécois were only sure that they no longer trusted the federal Liberals to assure them of an equal place in Confederation.

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[278]"On appuie les gens de l'air," *Le Mirabel*, Saint-Jerôme, 28 September 1976: 2.
[279]Jean Fontaine, "Le conseil municipal de Plessisville appuie les gens de l'air," Plessisville, *Le Feuille d'Érable*, 16 September 1976: A3; Gilles Loyer, "Joliette appuie les Gens de l'air," *Joliette Journal*, 15 September 1976: A10.
[280]Fraser, "Plains of Abraham" 18.

All points of view were further debated, though, in the Quebec National Assembly, as both anglophone and francophone MNAs, Liberal and péquiste, attempted to come to terms with the implications of the air traffic controllers' dispute.

Reflecting the opinions of their constituents, Quebec's MNAs also focused on the memorandum of understanding in their responses to the dispute. At the behest of the Parti québécois, an emergency debate was called for June 30, following the announcement of Lang's agreement. Indicative of the tenor of the political climate in Quebec was the position taken in this debate by the governing Liberals. The tenuous nature of the federalism of the provincial Liberals, circumscribed as it was by the pervasive influence of neo-nationalism, was evidenced in Bourassa's and his caucus's distancing themselves from their counterparts in Ottawa and reiterating instead their allegiance to Bill 22 and the pre-eminence of French in Quebec. Fernand Lalonde, the minister responsible for the implementation of Bill 22, said in the course of the debate that the Official Language Act "has inspired and is inspiring Québécois in relation to their language, that vehicle of their culture."[281] Later, at a meeting of Liberal youth in Matane on the Gaspé, Robert Bourassa drew clearly the distinction between the federal and Quebec branches of the party in remarks reminiscent of the philosophical differences between Citélibristes and neo-nationalists:

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[281]Pierre-Paul Gagné, "La crise de l'air crée l'unanimité à Québec," editorial, Montreal, *La Presse*, 1 July 1976: A2.

> We are certainly not against bilingualism across Canada. But our priority is Quebec. We are not going to forego this priority in the hope of gaining more for our minorities in Saskatchewan.[282]

In the minds of Bourassa and the provincial Liberal Party, "bilingualism does not go far enough for Quebec."[283] The solution to the limits posed by federal bilingualism were, moreover, far-reaching and fundamental. Quebec must, Bourassa claimed, wrest from Ottawa more control over its internal affairs:

> If the federal government is incapable of ensuring respect for the French language because of its political debts to an English-speaking majority . . . then it becomes necessary to bring about certain changes in the constitution . . . It is the agreement with the air controllers and pilots which is politically stupid."[284]

Secondly, Bourassa promised neither to renounce nor modify Bill 22 in an attempt "to facilitate the federal government's task of implementing bilingualism in Canada."[285] What Bourassa seemed to be implying if not stating outright was that the outcome of the air traffic controllers' dispute, particularly the memorandum of understanding, had brought Québécois to a turning point in their political life. By giving in to their "indebtedness" to their anglophone constituents, the Trudeau government revealed its inability to protect Québécois' right to work

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[282]quoted in Rob Bull, "Quebec: English vs English -- and French vs French," *Vancouver Sun*, 7 July 1976: 6.
[283]"Air agreement had three mistakes," editorial, *Vancouver Sun*, 5 July 1976: 11.
[284]Dominique Clift, "Bourassa adopts brash tone," editorial, *Montreal Star*, 6 July 1976: A7.
[285]"Air crisis basic to repatriation: Premier," *Montreal Gazette*, 5 July 1976: 4.

in French in Quebec, leaving them no choice but to look for that protection solely within the boundaries of their own province.

Significantly, in outlining his proposals for dealing with the crisis, Bourassa's rhetoric was that of a péquiste, not a federalist. Yet when one considers the roots of the modern Liberal Party in Quebec, the neo-nationalism which made possible both René Lévesque and the modern, activist state in which all Québécois had placed their confidence, it is understandable that indeed Quebec Liberals would be closer cousins to their péquiste opponents in Quebec than to their Liberal confrères in Ottawa. Moreover, that Bourassa's views were akin to Québécois public opinion and editorial commentary on the issue underscores another fact, and that is that neo-nationalism was not just an ideology of the province's leaders but seemed to have been accepted by a significant proportion of Québécois throughout the province. Few commentators and even fewer members of the public showed support for the Canada envisioned by Trudeau. Indeed, the francophone minorities outside Quebec were virtually never mentioned, and in the demand to make Quebec more French was the implicit assumption that the minority language rights of anglophones and other-language immigrants to Quebec would necessarily by encroached upon. In their responses to the air traffic controllers' dispute Québécois evidently had made not the federalist, Citélibriste wager, but the neo-nationalist one. And the events of the summer of 1976

had the effect of confirming to them the wisdom of their choice.

In their own reactions to the memorandum of understanding the péquistes followed neo-nationalism to what they felt was its logical end; that is, independence for Quebec. During the June 30 emergency debate in the Quebec National Assembly Marcel Léger, PQ MNA for Lafontaine, declared that the government's "total capitulation" only proved that Québécois would always be subject to the will of the majority and would "never truly be masters of their destiny and their language."[286] He continued:

> If the language of work in Quebec ought to be French it is absolutely abnormal that the controllers cannot speak to each other in French in Quebec.[287]

The PQ's opposition leader in the Assembly, Jacques-Yvan Morin, spelled out the reasons why MOT's response to the anglophone airmen's strike action demonstrated the need for Quebec to seek independence. "French power" in Ottawa, he claimed, was subject to the will of the anglophone majority; consequently, Quebec was the only "country" where French-speakers could affirm, without ambiguities, their cultural and linguistic rights. And if Quebec were condemned to remain a province of Canada, it would have neither the political nor constitutional means to secure respect for the French language even within Quebec.[288]

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[286]Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, Vol. 17, 30 June 1976: 1889.
[287]Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, Vol. 17, 30 June 1976: 1891.
[288]Gagné, "La crise"

Outside the Assembly, René Lévesque reiterated these conclusions. That Trudeau had capitulated before the obstinacy of anglophone controllers and pilots, he said, indicated that the federal government not only could not protect the French language outside Québec;

> it even restricts the use of French within Quebec itself . . . It's proof that people who would believe in a bilingual Canada from sea to sea have failed.[289]

Lévesque called the air traffic controllers' dispute "the sad outcome of 109 years of federalism and eight years of French power."[290]

Beyond the capital both Liberals and péquistes wasted no time in condemning the Trudeau government and restating their own commitment to les gens de l'air and their belief in the Quebec government as the *moteur principal* of Québécois' language rights. In Joliette, for example, Liberal MNA Robert Quenneville claimed that the memorandum of understanding went contrary to the tenet of Bill 22 which made French the language of work in Quebec,[291] while Jacques Veilleux, Liberal MNA for Saint-Jean, insisted that Crown corporations operating in Quebec, whether Air Canada, Canadian National Railways, or Radio-Canada, had to abide by Bill 22 or suffer the consequences provided therein for companies unwilling to pursue francization.[292]

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[289]Herbert Bauch, "All political stripes in Quebec attack federal concessions on airport French," Toronto, *Globe and Mail*, 30 June 1976: 1.

[290]Bauch, "All political stripes"

[291]"Quenneville et La Salle appuient les Gens de l'Air," *Joliette Journal*, 7 July 1976: 9.

[292]"Veilleux aussi réclame la démission de Lang,"

Communications minister Denis Hardy later echoed both statements by telling *Le Devoir* that "the protection of the French language is an imperative of the first order in Quebec" and that the Quebec government had to maintain vigilance over its constituents' rights whenever they were called into question.[293] And in a letter of July 9 to *La Feuille d'Érable*, péquiste Jacques Baril said that Québécois had been fooled by federalism and that they would henceforth have "to build their own country: Quebec."[294]

Only anglophone MNAs did not share the enthusiasm for more provincial autonomy. During the emergency debate four anglophone members of the Assembly chose to debate in English in the hopes, noted *La Presse*, of having their views heard in the rest of Canada.[295] John Ciaccia, from the Montreal constituency of Mount Royal, voiced his opposition to Bill 22 and warned English-speaking Canadians that if they wanted Canada to survive, "the attitude of people outside Quebec will necessarily have to change."[296] He believed that anglophone bigotry outside Quebec was making it impossible for Quebec anglophones to fight for their own language rights.[297] His colleague Harry Blank issued a

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[292](cont'd) Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, *Le Canada-Français*, 7 July 1976: 9.
[293]Guy Deshaies, "Quebec perd le contrôle de son espace aérien," Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 21 September 1976: 4.
[294]Letter to *La Feuille d'Érable*, Plessisville, 5 August 1976: 4.
[295]Gagné, "La crise"
[296]quoted in Patrick Doyle, "Assembly backs French in controller-pilot war," *Montreal Gazette*, 2 July 1976: 2.
[297]Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, Vol. 17, June 30, 1976: 1898.

similar warning:

> The way to disrupt this country, the way to create a separate Quebec, is just the way they're doing it now.[298]

The result of the emergency debate in the National Assembly was a unanimous resolution, first proposed by the Parti québécois, to endorse AGAQ in its fight for French in the air. As we have seen, anglophone and francophone provincial Liberals reached their unanimous conclusion from different vantage points. Bourassa, Lalonde, and their colleagues believed, as did the PQ, that Ottawa had shown itself inadequate to the task of protecting francophones' language rights; for the Liberals to endorse les gens de l'air when Ottawa appeared to have repudiated them reaffirmed Québécois' confidence in the Quebec government's role in safeguarding and enhancing the French language. Anglophone Quebec MNAs, on the other hand, were opposed to Bill 22 and the thinking that spawned it; thus, they had a vested interest in the success of bilingualism. They felt that if francization of control towers succeeded thanks to the federal policy of bilingualism, its success would prove that draconian legislation such as Bill 22, which severely restricted the rights of Quebec's English-speakers, would be unnecessary.

The positions taken by Quebec's MNAs become more significant when compared to those of Liberal Members of Parliament from Quebec, most of whom maintained their

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[298]Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, Vol. 17, 30 June 1976: 1900.

support for bilingualism and thereby for the vision of Canada espoused by Trudeau. The most outspoken of these was, of course, Jean Marchand, for whom Lang's agreement was the determining factor in his decision to resign from Trudeau's cabinet. He had been contemplating such a move for other reasons, but in his letter of resignation he told Trudeau that he "could not stay in a government that is prepared to negotiate bilingualism."[299] Upon Marchand's resignation, AGAQ's secretary, Pierre Beaudry, noted that Marchand "represented the element of continuity of the politics of the Fathers of Confederation."[300] In other words, in his role as one of the three francophone "wise men" Marchand had sought to strengthen Canadian unity by giving francophones a stronger voice in Ottawa, the same assumption that founded the bilingualism policy. Other francophone members of the federal Liberal cabinet were equally insensed by the agreement; Jeanne Sauvé, for example, accused Otto Lang of "kneeling down to a bunch of fanatics."[301] That Lang's Quebec colleagues would be unhappy with the memorandum is hardly surprising. However, what is noteworthy about their reactions are the assumptions about language policy which they revealed. Most Liberal MPs from Quebec agreed that for Québécois there was a choice of either bilingualism or, in effect, Bill 22. Failure by Ottawa to implement bilingualism

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[299]quoted in Robert Lewis, "A Nation Divided Against Itself," *MacLean's*, 12 July 1976: 18.
[300]"French controllers work to rule," *Montreal Gazette*, 2 July 1976: 1.
[301]"Minister says Lang gave in," *Ottawa Citizen*, 3 July 1976: 5.

in a sector of the federal civil service in Quebec would ultimately leave them no choice, however, but to look to provincial legislation to ensure their right to work in French. But, as Pierre de Bané, MP from the Gaspé riding of Matapédia-Matane, stated:

> I firmly believe that our future as francophones comes through our belonging to Canada . . . The separation of Quebec must be inevitable if francophone Quebecers conclude that the federal government is the government of the English, and that they have to turn to the government of Quebec for the defense of their language. Either the government of Canada is the champion and the guarantor of the two languages or this country will no longer exist.[302]

Francis Fox, a member of the Liberal cabinet, called the agreement a step backward for defenders of the federal government, but he also insisted that it did not commit the government to anything as far as the policy of bilingualism was concerned since bilingualism was fundamental to Canada as a nation "defined by the coexistence of two linguistic communities, francophone and anglophone, having the same rights and obligations towards each other."[303] In the same vein MP Armand Caouette said:

> the survival of Canada depends on the capacity of the Canadian government to show Quebecers and all French Canadians that it is possible to live and operate in French within the framework of Canada.[304]

But at least one Quebec Member of Parliament, however,

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[302]Pierre de Bané, "Le bilinguisme dans les airs: un test fondamental," letter to *l'Avant-Poste Gaspésien*, 25 August 1976: 13.
[303]quoted in "Contrôleurs et pilots sont des fanatiques," editorial, Lachute, *L'Argenteuil*, 4 August 1976: 2.
[304]"Avec l'affaire des contrôleurs aériens, c'est l'avenir de Canada qui se joue," editorial, Rouyn, *La Frontière*, 30 June 1976: 5.

disagreed with this assumption. Interviewed by John Gray, the unnamed representative stated that "from his vantage point, the dispute was not about bilingualism at all:

> We're back to the basic question about being able to speak French in Quebec: it's about using our own language in that one province, as simple as that.[305]

This ostensibly federalist MP saw the issue in the same light as Quebec's Liberals and péquiste MNAs; his point of view thus contrasts with those of other Liberal MPs from Quebec. Trudeau's colleagues still held firm to the belief that bilingualism would ensure Québécois an equal partnership in the Canadian federal system. Because of their vested interest in the success of bilingualism, anglophone members of the Quebec National Assembly agreed. Francophone representatives in the Assembly were doubtful of this possibility, however, and their doubt stemmed from their adherence to neo-nationalism, the outcome of the air traffic controllers' dispute serving to justify positions already held or harden more tentative ones.

Editorial commentary and letters to the print media indicate that the views of Quebec's provincial politicians reflected those of a significant proportion of constituents throughout the province. From the Gaspé to the Ottawa River valley, Québécois, as a result of Ottawa's handling of the air traffic control conflict, lost what confidence they had in the federal government's ability to entrench and protect their language rights and called for remedies ranging from

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[305]John Gray, "What a difference eight years makes," *Montreal Gazette*, 2 July 1976: 9.

still more provincial autonomy to outright independence. In seeking these remedies, editors and letter-writers reconfirmed their belief in the neo-nationalist tenets that Quebec was "home" and that it must be a home where a Québécois could live and work solely in French. As the Sherbrooke *Tribune*'s editor succinctly stated:

> It will be the end of the country, as Mr. Trudeau predicts, only if anglophones are obstinate enough to refuse us the right to above all be ourselves, Québécois before Canadians.[306]

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[306]Desclos, "Serions-nous"

Conclusion

In 1976 the air traffic controllers' dispute became the forum through which the Québécois' articulated their aspirations for their political future. The first of these was the entrenchment of Quebec as a francophone state. The second was that Quebec City, not Ottawa, was the government to which Québécois would look to ensure that this process took place unhindered.

These aspirations stemmed from the neo-nationalist ideology which emerged in the late fifties and found political expression when the Lesage administration was elected in 1960. Neo-nationalists were advocates of political retrenchment in Quebec, believing that the Québécois constituted a nation whose identity could best be protected through a strong Quebec government. When Lesage came to power, Quebec's economic structure was characterized by an ethnic division of labour which precluded French-speakers' achieving economic equality with the anglophone minority no matter how many Crown corporations the Québec state established. The Lesage government realized, however, that if Québécois were to be truly masters in their own house, steps had to be taken to make it possible for them to live and work in French in all sectors and at all levels of their economy.

During the same period Ottawa, too, was developing a language policy in the hopes of resolving the perennial problem of reconciling Canada's two founding peoples. But

the policy's author was in this instance Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who despised nationalism of any kind but seemed to harbour a particular antipathy to that which had developed in Quebec. He was also a Citélibriste, and along with like-minded liberal democrats Jean Marchand and Gérard Pelletier was determined to preserve Canadian federalism by securing Québec a stronger voice within that system. The language policy which Trudeau and his party developed reflected this foundation. Because it was based on the assumption that Quebec nationalism could be defeated and Canadian unity maintained if Québécois could identify with Canada rather than solely with Quebec, the Official Languages Act gave French and English equal status. In practical terms, this meant that both francophones and anglophones would henceforth have equal access to federal government services in their own language.

While the Act did open opportunities for francophones in the federal civil service, it did not, as McRoberts has pointed out, address the question of the ethnic division of labour within Quebec itself. Nor did Trudeau realize the power that neo-nationalism would have once Québécois had put the state to work for them and saw their confidence in it rewarded. These two factors may well have limited the appeal the Official Languages Act could have for Québécois even upon its enactment in 1968. At that point they had benefited from eight years of an increasingly powerful Quebec state. At least one tenet of neo-nationalism, therefore, had taken

hold, that of an interventionist state with increased autonomy from Ottawa. By 1976, however, the movement to make French the language of work in Quebec had intensified and had been given the blessing of the Quebec state through the Gendron commission and Bill 22, the Official Language Act, which for the first time gave the French language primacy within Quebec. This Act was based on other neo-nationalist precepts; first, that provincial autonomy extended to the protection of language rights by the Quebec state, not by Ottawa, and secondly, that French had to be officially recognized as the predominant language in Quebec. Moreover, by 1976 political parties, even the federalist Liberals, invoked the rhetoric of neo-nationalism, while even anglophone Quebecers acknowledged that the movement to make French the language of work was irreversible. As for bilingualism, Québécois supported it only insofar as it furthered the entrenchment of the French language and then only on their terms. Given this political reality in Quebec, the philosophy behind the federal policy was for Québécois simply irrevelant. As Jean-Marc Léger stated:

> More bilingual signs and the end of the injustices done to the French minorities in the West are not going to solve the problem . . . For neo-nationalism has no intention of swapping its desire for a Quebec that is master of its destiny for a mixture of languages and cultures spread from sea to sea . . . How much sovereignty will the national State of Quebec have? Events, concrete conditions, and the people will decide.[307]

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[307] Jean-Marc Léger, "Where Does Neo-Nationalism Lead?" *French Canadian Nationalism*, ed. Ramsay Cook 313.

Consequently, when Ottawa made its move to implement the Official Languages Act in control towers in Quebec itself, albeit which was within its own jurisdiction, it put the federal policy on a collision course with the widely held neo-nationalist belief that Quebec and not Ottawa was the guarantor of Québécois' rights, including language rights. Under these circumstances Ottawa's attempts to make Quebec's air traffic control towers bilingual had to succeed if the federal government's credibility as the guarantor of all francophones' language rights was to be preserved. But Ottawa took a dilatory approach, first boldly announcing the progressive implementation of its policy and then, through the memorandum of understanding, less boldly announcing a halt to French in the air pending further study.

Taken by itself, the memorandum of understanding would have angered Québécois. However, it had been reached following a heated backlash by English-speaking Canadians outside Quebec against the bilingualism policy and in some cases against Québécois as well, and MOT's abrupt about-face on its implementation plans seems from evidence and from appearances to have been a retreat in the face of this outcry. To make matters worse, the agreement granted concessions to the anglophone airmen which were humiliating to both the federal government and to Québécois. In an issue which had already engendered many misgivings among Québécois because of the uncertain steps taken by MOT throughout the implementation process, the memorandum of understanding was

the crowning moment. It had the effect of substantiating an already held perception of Québécois that Ottawa was hostile to rather than supportive of their aspirations. The inevitable result was for Québécois to turn ever more inward, to the state which represented and thus safeguarded their nation.

The strike by anglophone airmen against bilingualism, then, helped to cement in the minds of Québécois a belief which had been developing since the beginning of the Quiet Revolution. That was the belief in the Quebec state as the instrument through which Québécois as a national entity would reach their full economic potential. Provincially enacted language policy giving primacy to French was part of that process. The battle fought by les gens de l'air, and fought against a government that was ostensibly supportive of the movement to make Quebec a pre-eminently francophone province, only made the Quebec state's place in that movement more obvious.

The actual problem of determining whether bilingual air traffic control would be safe was placed before a commission of inquiry comprising three justices, Julien Chouinard, Darrel Heald, and W. R. Sinclair. It concluded its first set of deliberations in June 1977, following hearings in which MOT, CATCA, CALPA, and some Quebec controllers participated. AGAQ as an organization had determined to boycott the hearings because MOT had refused to implement bilingual VFR control immediately. Nevertheless, Jean-Luc Patenaude, a

member of AGAQ's executive, took it upon himself to see that as many individual AGAQ members as he could muster were present at the hearings. The commission also ordered an independent study of 17,000 accident reports and conducted simulation exercises. On June 8, 1977, it handed down the first of its two reports, which unanimously recommended implementation of full bilingual VFR control for exclusively VFR airstrips and as well for the mixed environment of Saint-Hubert and for planes traversing the Montreal TRSA. The report was tabled in the House by Otto Lang and accepted by all three political parties.

The commission then turned to the preparation of its final report, which entailed another set of hearings and simulation studies, this time emphasizing bilingual control for IFR conditions. In the interim, Joe Clark became Prime Minister; consequently, the final report was submitted to a Conservative Transport minister, Don Mazankowski. Once again, the report unanimously recommended bilingual control, this time for the use of French for VFR control in mixed VFR/IFR environments at Dorval and Mirabel and for the progressive implementation of bilingual control for IFR flights. Of the 17,000 accident reports studied by the independent consultants, the commission noted that only one could be attributed to misunderstandings resulting from two-language control. Furthermore, the usefulness of the listening watch, CALPA's main argument against bilingual air traffic control, was declining, said the commission, because

of advances in aviation communications technology.

When the final report was tabled in the House of Commons, Clark and Mazankowski accepted it on behalf of the Conservative government, but the question of the free vote prescribed by the memorandum of understanding still loomed. No doubt remembering the stormy reception for previous efforts to introduce bilingual control, Clark accepted the commission's findings as quietly as possible, and MOT expressed its wish to CATCA and CALPA that they do the same. They complied with little fuss. As a result, Clark and Mazankowski were able to ignore the free vote provision of the original agreement, thus avoiding any unwanted publicity because of it.

CALPA, however, did not concur with the commission's findings, and an editorial in *Pilot* expressed dismay that the organization's "reasonable doubts about bilingual ATS . . . were brushed aside."[308] Although CALPA had modified its own stance on the question, stating that bilingual air traffic control could be made to work "if every care is taken," the organization accepted the report essentially because its members recognized a lost battle. Significantly, the pilots were acutely aware of another critical factor militating against any further objections on their part. As the new president, Roland Cook, warned:

> The political realities and options facing the new government, especially with the Quebec referendum on the horizon, were very clear and little solace could

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[308]Roland Cook, "The President's Report," *Pilot*, Fall 1979: 3.

> be expected from that direction -- and having seen all along what happens when a technical matter becomes embroiled in and is used to find a solution for a political situation, I am not sure we would have wanted to go that route anyway.[309]

Instead, CALPA resolved to confine its further contributions on the subject to participation in the implementation process and providing a consulting service to MOT.

The implementation process itself began in May 1980 and by 1983 80 percent of VFR air traffic control in the original five airports was being conducted in French. Bilingual IFR control increased commensurate with the numbers of French-speaking flight crews working for major airlines; consequently, less than 5 percent of IFR flying in Quebec was bilingual by 1983, although that number is expected to increase.[310]

In the meantime the Parti québécois swept the governing Liberals from office in Quebec, capturing 71 of 110 seats in the provincial election of November 15, 1976. Some historians and other writers believe that the air traffic controllers' dispute helped to put them in power; others, however, have emphasized other factors. Edward McWhinney, for example, points out that the PQ downplayed its separatist mandate during the campaign, and at any rate the Bourassa government's record in several respects was by no means enviable.[311] Nevertheless, the election of the PQ and

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[309]Cook, "Report" 4.
[310]Borins 215.
[311]Edward McWhinney, *Quebec and the Constitution 1960-1978*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): xi. See also Radwanski 308; Pinard and Hamilton.

Québécois' response to the air traffic controllers' strike were both indicative of their adherence to neo-nationalism, and the PQ, with the overwhelming support of Québécois, accelerated the province's evolution towards unilingualism with Bill 101, which contained many of the same provisions as Bill 22 but with more stringent provisions for enforcement.[312] The long-term consequences of the Bill and its neo-nationalist underpinnings were described by McRoberts:

> It is now an accepted fact of life that Quebec is a pre-eminently Francophone province. No Francophone political figures, and few Anglophone ones, are advocating a return to official bilingualism.[313]

It is perhaps somewhat ironic that by the time the bilingualism policy had succeeded in the air, it had failed on the ground, at least in Quebec. And although only a detailed study would ascertain the impact that the dispute over French in the air had on the election of the party that sealed the fate of official bilingualism in Quebec, at least a few of the principals of the air traffic control conflict saw a connection. Pierre Trudeau was one of them:

> I'm disappointed by the inability to do on both sides of the language barrier what was necessary to make Quebecers feel absolutely confident in Ottawa, and I think I've given . . . repeatedly the example of the air controllers' strike . . . "Maybe it's not possible," was their reaction, "to get equality of treatment, and therefore perhaps Trudeau is wrong

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[312]William Coleman, "From Bill 22 to Bill 101: The Politics of Language under the Parti Québécois," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 14(1981): 459. See also Raymond Hudon, "The 1976 Quebec Election," *Queen's Quarterly*, 84, 1(Spring 1977):28.

[313]McRoberts, *Quebec* 431.

and we need special status."[314]

CATCA president Jim Livingston also thought the dispute had played a significant role in the election of the PQ. On November 15, election day, he and Jean-Luc Patenaude were at a CATCA meeting in Victoria. When the news of Lévesque's victory reached them from Paul Sauvé arena, Patenaude pulled out a bottle of champagne and offered it to Livingston, whereupon Livingston remarked, "Only one bottle? After what we did for them, it should be a case."[315]

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[314]quoted in Radwanski 308.
[315]Dave Thomas, "Into the wild bleu yonder," *Maclean's* 3 September 1979: 23.

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